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Harold Lamb
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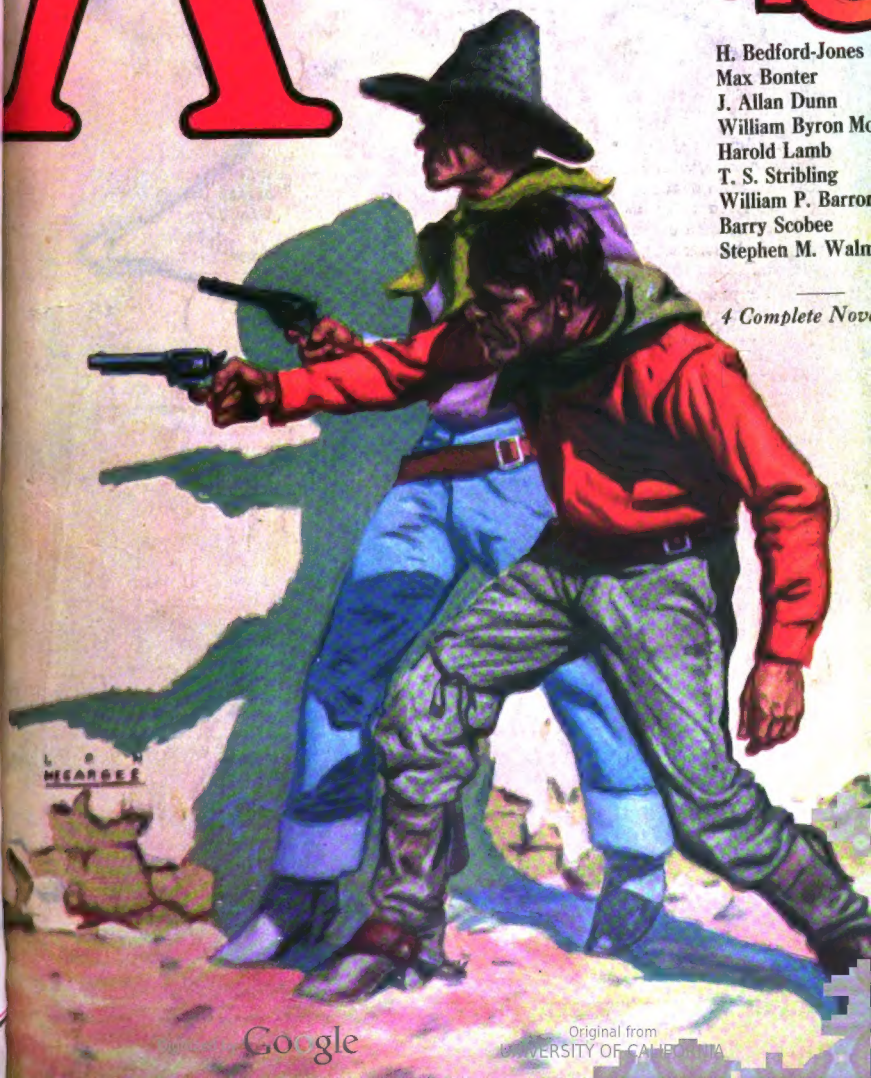

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Fooling the Wolf
with a Two-Cent Stamp

By Hotfoot

You've probably heard about the traveling man who, with five minutes left to catch the last train of the day, tried to persuade an old darky to carry his bags to the station. "Want to earn a quarter, Sam?" he asked. And the answer was, "No thanks, boss, ah've got one."

Four years ago, I felt much the same way about earning extra money. The old envelope was bringing in plenty to keep the family and me very comfortably. Why worry about earning *extra* money?

Then, suddenly, business slumped and the company began whittling the pay-roll. Vacant desks took the place of long familiar faces. In less than a month, I had to resign—with two weeks' pay.

Two weeks' pay, and only a few dollars in the bank, with a family to support, was the grim prospect I had to face. A new job would have to be found immediately. But there were no new jobs. And, after several painful weeks of rigid economy, we were at our wits' ends to keep the wolf from the door.

One day I read an advertisement telling of an easy way other men used to earn a living. Half doubtfully I wrote for particulars. But my doubts quickly vanished when, in my first week, I earned $11 in a few spare hours. Soon I was doubling that figure. And, in less than three months, we were living comfortably again. To-day this business brings me over $4000 a year—*and it is growing every day!*

If I were the only one making good money at this work, I would'nt ask you to try it. But there are scores of men earning as much as I am, and hundreds who add $5 to $20 to their weekly salaries, simply by securing the new and renewal *Adventure* subscriptions of their friends and neighbors. Far from being an experiment, this work will positively increase your income—even if you have only an hour a week to spare.

It cost me only a 2-cent stamp to chase the wolf from the door, and build a *permanent* income. It will cost you no more—and who can tell how much more it will bring you? There is no obligation. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain by returning the coupon below. Send it to-day.

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Please send me, without obligation, full particulars concerning your practical money-making plan.

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**Occasionally one of our stories will be called an "Off-the-Trail" story, a warning that it is in some way different from the usual magazine stories, perhaps a little different, perhaps a good deal. It may violate a canon of literature or a custom of magazines, or merely be different from the type usually found in this magazine. The difference may lie in unusual theme, material, ending, or manner of telling. No question of relative merit is involved.*

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A New Serial and Two Complete Novelettes

WHEN *Old Misery*, the knife-throwing Mountain Man, threw a scare into *Gilbert* with his tame grizzly bear, *Bill Williams*, he didn't suppose a short time later he'd be hiding *Gilbert*. But so it turned out. The posse was hot on *Gilbert's* trail, convinced he had assisted *Joaquin Murieta*, the Mexican bandit, to escape. This was but one of the situations that confronted *Old Misery;* there was the girl *Maria*, for instance, and the nugget-ledge. "OLD MISERY," a five-part story of California in 1853, by Hugh Pendexter, begins in the next issue.

HE WAS brave, but it gave him more pleasure to know that he was also handsome, and he went into the Venezuelan jungle fearing the scorching sun and stinging insects that might spoil his looks more than the *tigres* and the poisoned arrows that might take his life. Better for him, when he got among the Maquiritares, if he had been disfigured from birth. "BLACK WHITE," by Arthur O. Friel, is a complete novelette in the next issue.

JEALOUSY by the Jutes of the Danes when they were on a visit of friendship led to the treacherous night-attack where the blood of royalty and commoner mingled. The king, overlord of all, composed the difference, but there remained a debt of vengeance to be paid, while the spirits of the dead cried unappeased. "THE HONOR OF A KING," a complete novelette in the next issue, by Arthur Gilchrist Brodeur.

Other stories in the next issue are forecast on the last page of this one.

***Adventure* is out on the 10th, 20th and 30th of each month**

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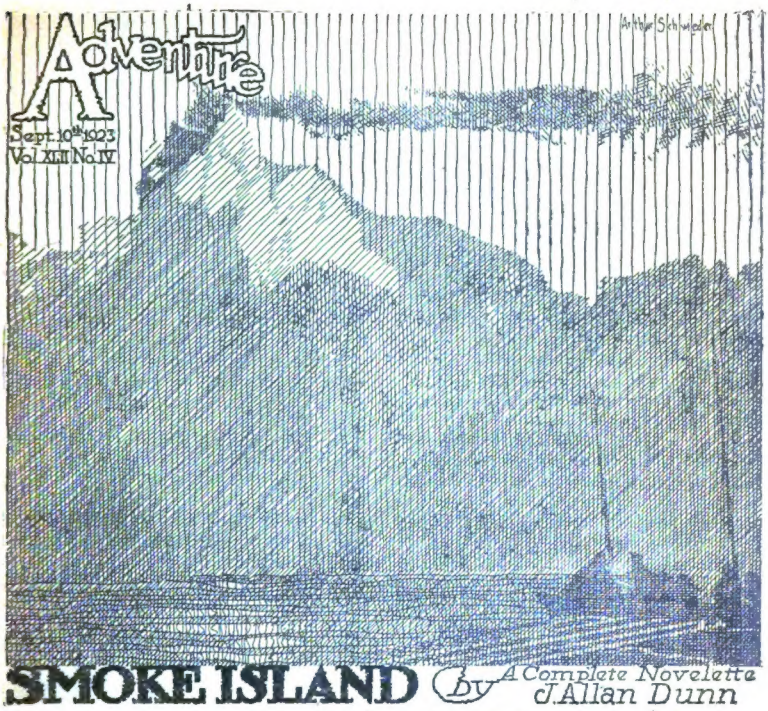

SMOKE ISLAND

A Complete Novelette

By J. Allan Dunn

Author of "The Pigeons of Wong Foo."

TAMBURI, richest and most beautiful of Fijian plantations, drowsed in the afternoon sun beneath a sky that was deeper than any sapphire, more flawless than any jewel. In the green bowl of the valley, walled on three sides by purple hills, the tropic vegetation grew almost visibly, cell added to cell, bud quickening into leaf and flower, flower fertilizing into fruit, fruit ripening; an endless round of vitality throughout the seasons, fostered and encouraged by the skill and care of man.

There were orange-groves hung with juicy, golden globes, pineapples storing up their aromatic, luscious juice, acre upon acre of flourishing vanilla, orchards of cacao and allspice besides palms of areca and cocoanuts, with great trees for shade, with lawns, hedges of hibiscus, scarlet, double blooms of white and pink, gay crotons and dræcena, fragrance of ylang-ylang and frangipani, showers of purple bougainvillea.

On the fourth side the bowl was broken and, through the gap, there showed in pastel shades of green and blue and lavender the far off plains of Viti Levu, three thousand feet below.

On the tops of the cliffs the foliage waved and flaunted in the wind, coming from the sea, Suva way, but there was no breeze in the valley that held the moist heat like an infusion.

The tattie-blinds closed in the verandas, awnings protected the windows of the upper story of the plantation house. Gideon, owner and creator of this prosperous loveliness, drowsed in a long chair of bamboo-cane on the eastern porch. His big figure showed signs of running too much to

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stomach and an extra chin though these increases could not disguise the powerful body nor the forceful face.

Success had smiled on Gideon after many years of grudging, hard-won favors. Tamburi had been the ideal that he had consummated, the seafarer's dream of a final landing. His energy had brought it to paying perfection so that it ran, with regular and expert overseeing, like a well-designed machine. Nowadays he slept a good deal, there were times when he yawned in spirit as well as physically, times when he felt lethargic, missed the stir of the more uncertain days and, for the lack of definite enterprise, yawned again, telling himself to take the ease that he had yearned for and earned in trading and recruiting, the gathering and sale of copra, *bêche-de-mer*, pearl-shell and turtle-shell from wild and remote beaches and lagoons.

Gideon snored with sounds like the practising of an amateur trombone-player. The discordant grunts were echoed with somewhat less lack of harmony from a corner where Joni, Gideon's favorite houseboy, nodded and dreamed.

In orchard, grove and plantation no figure moved. This was man's siesta hour. Nature was the master-gardener in control. Later, when the air cooled, the slaves of the soil would get busy.

Joni, waking or sleeping, was a dandy; evidenced by his *sulu* loin-cloth of orange-colored cashmere, his white singlet and trim leather belt; established by his mop of wiry hair, bleached a dull yellow with lime-paste, trained and trimmed into a six-inch bush the shape of an ancient Spanish helmet, beveled and curved and as neatly rounded off as a yew-hedge clipped by an artist gardener. Dressed with coconut oil, scented with wild ginger-flowers, it looked more like a block of wood than hair. At night Joni wore a compressing band as religiously as any bobbed-hair flapper uses aids to hirsute beauty. In it, stuck in like pins into a cushion, he wore tuberoses, tufts of fern and bunch grass. His head-dress was literally his crowning glory and many maids sighed as they talked of Joni's "wonderful hair."

Now Joni's head was bowed low toward his knees as he hunkered down in the corner. The floral adornments were wilting in the heat. Dewy perspiration broke out like a bloom on his plump smooth, walnut-brown skin, even as it did upon the countenance of his master, whose old-time tan had slowly faded until now it was merely burned pink.

The sun striped in through the tattie-slats. Jeweled insects buzzed on their shining trails, the plants grew, the fruits achieved more juice, the flowers greater attractions of fragrance through the alchemic working of overhead sun and underground water. Gideon droned and snorted and Joni — comparatively — purred. Tamburi was in siesta.

UP FROM Suva, twelve miles away, through the golden, molten nooning, another white man rode a gaunt and mulish-minded Australian stock horse, stained with the sweat of travel, both of them; but pressing on toward the notch in the hills where Tamburi nestled, a plain landmark all the way.

Through pandanus prairies with the stilted roots and mop-like foliage, through a mile or more of rolling upland plain where the hot wind rustled the feathery guinea-grass, through stifling shade under tree-ferns and wild grapefruit and citron, lashed together with creepers where scarlet salvia and lilac orchids vied with pink and white azalea to display beauties that the traveler ignored.

He was a small man, hardly undersized but a little below the average height of his race. Beside Gideon he would be dwarfish, but the planter was two inches over six feet and built in proportion. The rider might have weighed a hundred and forty pounds through he was firmly convinced that every hour of riding reduced him not less than eight ounces. His smooth-shaven face was blistered and inflamed, his lip was split, his wrists painfully swollen and the back of his neck blistered with a watery puffiness. Every mile added to his discomfort but the lines in his face were set into a mould of determination that matched the steady light in his blue eyes where the whites were a little sun-scorched between the sandy lashes. He rode like a cross between a jockey and a cowboy. On him the roan had tried out all its tricks and had finally succumbed with a grouchy admiration toward the man who mounted it, and whose knee grip was firm as that of a saddle-tree while his hands played reins against bit as a skilful angler handles a hooked and fighting trout.

Aside from his tender skin, unusued to

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tropic violence, the body of Andy McCord was a thing of whalebone, steel, whipcord and rubber and he had the pluck of an unwhipped Airedale. Jockey once, lightweight once—that was twelve years ago—oil driller, prospector, horse-trainer, racing-rider for a motor-cycle manufacturer, despatch man over seas, faro dealer at Tia Juana, born rover and a square sport; McCord was a long way from his own cruising ground, the State bounded on the west by the Pacific Ocean, on the north by Oregon, the south by Mexico and the east by Nevada and the Colorado River; the stage for all of Andy's close packed activities except the jaunt in the Argonne—California.

It was three o'clock when he reached the notch and looked down into the green and gold cup of Tamburi. There was a breeze blowing through from back of him where Suva lay and the blue ocean stretched out wrinkled and patterned like moiré silk, far-specked with the lesser Fijis and the volcanic atolls of the Tongas. McCord passed the back of his hairy hand over his forehead and brought it away dripping wet.

"Death Valley is an icebox along of this," he muttered to the roan. "This is sure —— in a gold frame. All looks and no comfort. But that's Tubari and here's hoping this chap Gideon offers us a drink, you balky old hammer-headed fool."

For all his split lip and dry voice there was a measure of fellowship in his attitude toward the roan he had conquered and, in appreciation, the horse turned its snaky neck and tried to nip McCord's dusty foot which neatly spurned him on the nose.

"Git on down there, Lightning," said Andy facetiously naming his slow-gaited mount.

Slowly they dropped into the valley where everybody slept, riding along a well-kept road, through a gate, past trim huts set in the foliage, another gate, the garden and so at last to the plantation house, the blinded windows and veranda where Lightning made his point and, having struck once, refused to go elsewhere.

McCord hitched him to the veranda rail of the wide steps and advanced to the source of the snores. The spacious porch, matted, set with bamboo furniture, with fruit and flowers on a table, seemed in its twilight a cave of delightful refuge from the glare outside. He looked a trifle enviously at the recumbent form of Gideon and then he stirred up that of Joni with a hand on his shoulder.

Joni awakened as alertly as a sleeping animal. His eyes widened, rolled, and he rose to his feet in a triumph of suppleness. To him a white man was a more of less superior being but here was surely a mad one, with his red, swollen face, riding through the heat of the day when no one who was not absolutely a fool stayed inside and forgot the sun in sleep.

"What name you come here?" asked Joni and McCord, misunderstanding the beach-English idiom, answered literally—

"I want to see John Gideon."

Divided between fear of his master and offense to the stranger, Joni's dark face registered doubt, apology, resolution.

"Better you wait along time he stop him sleep," he said. "Suppose I wake him befo' that time he give me ——. You wait by-'n'-by—I catch you nut for drink."

The bamboo lounge-chair creaked as Gideon broke through the light film of siesta slumber. He roused himself on one arm, his big voice booming angrily.

"Eh, you Joni boy, what name you make that racket? What name——"

He broke off in astonishment at the sight of Andy McCord in his sweat-stained, wrinkled whites with his inflamed face out of which stared the steady blue eyes looking as if they were made of blue enamel-ware.

"This gemman he speak he like talk along of you," stuttered Joni.

"My name's Gideon," said the planter. "Did you want to see me, suh?"

Andy's face broke into a painful smile. The trip he had made from Suva was partly responsible for the thought that rose and prompted the radiant expression.

"He's a Southerner," Andy told himself as the planter ended with his "suh." "In a minute he'll be offering me a real drink—not a confounded nut."

McCord had not yet learned the joy that lies in the contents of a young, cool coconut. Coconuts he associated with the desiccated pulp strewn on cakes and candy, with the fibrous brown ovoids shown in fruit markets and sometimes carven into queer heads. For he had come, without wait except for tide and loading of cargo, almost five thousand miles, three weeks of ocean voyaging—the first week of it one of unalloyed agony from sea sickness—twenty-one hundred from San Francisco to Honolulu, twenty-two

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hundred and fifty to Apia and then six hundred odd in a beast of a cavorting steamer over to Suva—to say nothing of the horseback ride.

Andy was like the man carrying a message to Garcia. He had started out with one idea in mind, one fixed resolution of accomplishment, the urgent desire to get the thing over with as soon as possible and get back to California in time for the fall racing at Tia Juana—unless certain things had happened.

He was not a man of hair-trigger temper though he could be fast enough in action. But—to be offered the rancid milk of a nut by a yellow-haired brown man at the end of his trip—at least when he was in the home stretch—had stretched the elastic of his even humor close to snapping. Gideon, looming large in his Canton silk pajamas, his bare feet on the matting, his big face framed in iron gray hair and well-kept mustache and imperial, seemed to Andy's perception of human nature, a thinly disguised and beneficent god.

"I've got a letter to you from Lem Watts of San Diego," he said as he took a moist wallet from the inner pocket of his tunic.

Down came the eyebrows of Gideon over his gray eyes, keenly surveying the unkempt visitor. Broken whites sometimes came over the hills to Tamburi. They never got turned down but Gideon had a strong man's dislike of a failure.

"Lem Watts? Of San Diego? Not Captain Lem Watts of the *Marama?*"

"That was the name of his ship," said Andy huskily. His mouth seemed to be stuffed with smoldering cotton. "He's retired now."

"Lord bless my soul, suh! Lem Watts! Joni, what name you stand that way? Go fetch toddy—jump! Sit down, suh. A drink first—don't suppose you're a prohibitionist, by any chance?"

Andy shook his head. The imminence of a drink stopped speech. He sank into a chair after he had given Gideon the letter which the latter tossed on the table unread.

"Good, suh. I'll give you a man's drink. Then something for yo' sunburn. Yo' oughtn't to have been out this time of day. Limes and glycerine'll do the trick with some *nagri* leaves. You've no baggage?"

"This aint a visit," Andy achieved. "Bis'ness trip."

His eyes were glued on the tray with which Joni advanced. There were bottles on it, tall glasses—ice, by all that was holy—ice—and—greater miracle yet—a tumbler with sprigs of green, indubitably mint!

"Glass not very cold," apologized Joni, "you wake up too soon."

Yet there was a film of ice on the glasses. Andy watched as in a dream while amber liquor gurgled from the bottle and water was added with selected sprays of the fragrant mint, tickling nose and palate.

"Confusion to the Eighteenth Amendment, suh!" pledged Gideon. "The liquor's not from Kentucky but Canada, but it's sound stuff."

It was nectar to McCord and he said so.

"Lem Watts said you were a sport, Mr. Gideon. He said a mouthful. I know Lem pretty well. Another sport. He told me to come straight to you. No use writing. I've got to get in touch with my man, if he's alive. If he's dead I want to know it."

"I'm at your service, suh. Any friend of Lem's. I take it you've come from San Diego. Didn't know Lem was there. Haven't heard from him in years. That's the way things go and Lem's done more fo' me than most men. If I thought it 'ud do him a mite of good I'd staht fo' San Diego tomorrow.

"You're his proxy, suh. Command me, as soon as you're fixed up a bit. Tropic sun's a nasty thing to monkey with. Violet rays raise Old Ned with some folks. Joni, you go catch some *nagri* leaf, catch fresh limes. Quick! We'll soon better that. Then a sponge bath and some pajamas. I can fit you. Keep different sizes for guests. We'll talk things over at suppeh. I don't know what the Gov'nor of No'th Ca'olina says to the Gov'nor of South Ca'olina these days, but another julep will do you no harm while Joni gets those leaves."

"I'd like to know if I'm on the right track," said McCord a little doggedly. "If I ain't I can stand a day's lay off. I've been sun-singed before in the desert but these violet rays of yours have certainly crisped me. If I'm heading right, to know it will be encouraging to say the least of it. I'm looking for a man named Bill Edwards. Used to be at Levuka. Came down this way eight years ago. Dropped out of sight. He's got a wife and two kids at home. He's never seen the youngest. His wife would like to get in touch with him. If she ain't a widow she might as well be so far as he's concerned. If she is I've a notion she may be better off."

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"Bill Edwards. Friend of yours?"

"I've been a pretty good pal to him once in a while."

"H'm!" Gideon's eyes were somewhat quizzical. If McCord flushed under their scrutiny his scorched face did not betray it.

"I'm here in the interests of his wife," he said frankly. "She's up against it and she's not taking any outside help. Not even from me. Says she made her own bed and she's lying on it. If Bill's alive I want a talk with him. Those two kids of his—it's a rotten trick he's playing, Gideon."

"Tall, thin man, red-headed?"

"That's him. He wrote back once or twice. Always going to make a pile—pearls usually. I've a hunch Bill might mean well, though he was a born hobo. Had a way with women. Plausible cuss enough but no more backbone than a worm. Got the best little woman on the Pacific Coast. I'm a wander-bug myself but, if a man's got a wife and kids—like them—he's a skunk not to come through."

"H'm. I'm not a marryin' man myse'f. I like children, suh, but I like to handle my own affairs. Most women have an itch to run 'em fo' you. Exceptions, of co'se. Like this wife of Bill Williams?"

"You bet," said McCord. "They don't make 'em any better, Gideon. If Bill's alive, we'll see what can be done. She'll want him back, if it's only for the kids' sake. I reckon she knows the inside of him as well as the outside long ago. But she ain't the sort to quit. How about him Gideon?"

"He's alive all right, or was when I last heard of him. You sized him up when yo' said he had no mo' backbone than a worm, suh. Happy-go-lucky so't of a cuss an' mostly unlucky. Got a mild case of hookworm. Life's easy here if you want to loaf. Bill's tried a heap of things. Hired him once myself when I was trading. Made him a station agent. He's got no mo' bisness ability than a hoptoad. Too fond of square-face. Bill don't want a place in the sun, he's looking fo' a place in the shade. Goes bumming around with a half-white. Picks up a pearl now and then. Dries out some sea-slugs—or his chum does. Then they usually drift back to Suva. May be there now. If he is we can find him. Joni—where the dickens is that lazy snail?—Joni was in last night. He'll know. We'll put on that *nagri* first, got to be used fresh. Here he comes now.

"Edwards is alive, I reckon. If he's in Suva he'll have some funds though they won't last long. Give me those, Joni. Now, suh, if you'll come inside."

Half an hour afterward, McCord, cool, refreshed; soothing lotion on his face and wrists, pulpy leaves taking the burn and swelling from his neck, clad in pongee pajamas, slippered and revivified from sole to crown; sipped his third julep, listening to Joni.

Bill Edwards, it appeared, was in Suva with a miraculous tale of a virgin lagoon, with a handful of pearls with which he was to buy equipment, return to his find with his half-white pal, and return a Croesus.

"He speak he go home along his Mary, his *teiti* (children), buy plenty silluk, plenty ring, buy big *hare* (house). Last night he plenty drunk along Tomi Cummings' place."

"He'll not keep his pearls or money long in that hang-out," said Gideon. "If you're fit, McCord, we'll ride over after suppah, in the cool. I'll give you a better mount than you brought. Joni can lead that back."

"I'm fit as a new-strung fiddle," said Andy McCord.

He grinned, despite his split lip and Gideon found himself ready to endorse the things that his friend Lem Watts of San Diego had written down about his visitor. He wondered how Andy McCord stood with the wife of Bill Edwards, he wondered whether McCord had been sorry to learn that Bill was alive and how the latter's deserted wife would feel about the same thing. Edwards was the sort to win women, his very lack of strength of character would endear him to many, make them stick to him through thick and thin. Edwards stood a better chance than Andy McCord, Gideon fancied, though McCord was far the better man of the two, coming five thousand miles on the off chance of restoring a missing husband to his wife and family or, if that husband was dead, the remoter chance of stepping into his matrimonial slippers. That was the way Gideon sized it up.

"Either way she won't thank him, ten to one," he mused. "But he's a game little rooster."

Lem Watts had written:

Salt of the earth is Andy McCord. Square on all six sides and a dyed-in-the-wool sport. I've seen him tried out more than once and he don't

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have to have a spot-light to make good. The pattern wears right through with him and, since I don't ever expect to see you again, if you figure you owe me anything and get a chance to even up on Andy, hop to it, old-timer. And, for pity's sake, write, even if you are too lazy to come back to God's country. It ain't so bad here, Gid—we're right close to the line. Treat Andy right. He's a hundred per cent.

Gideon tossed the letter over to McCord. The envelop had been unsealed but he was quite sure that McCord had never read the contents.

"A great recommendation, Watts gives you," he said. "And Lem' don't talk to hear himself and hates writin' worse than I do. He's a performer, is Watts, not a speechmaker."

The planter's thoughts slipped back. He saw Lem Watts coming to the rescue, standing by, when a hurricane had stripped Gideon of all he possessed. Then there was Watts taking him off on a cruise aboard the *Marama* when he was down with a combination of a broken leg and island fever, tending him day and night with more than brotherly devotion because there was no one else to look after him properly. There were other matters—a score he had never been able to even and Gideon was a man who paid his debts.

"I don't know how far I can help you, suh," he said to Andy McCord, "but you can count on me—from start to finish."

The two gripped hands, big man and small man, mastiff and Airedale, gripped in the silent name of the greatest of all bonds, the friendship of man and man. Lem Watts, invisible, for witness.

BILL EDWARDS, the natural hobo, suddenly favored of Fortune, primed and flooded with drink until his face was scarlet, sat in the groggery of Tom—or Tomi—Cummings, a mile out from Suva on the Rewa road, playing poker.

He had exhibited his pearls, treated his pals and their pals and everybody within hailing distance and now, pressing his luck, he sat opposite Charlie Stewart—the remittance man with the Oxford accent and the monocle—with Silva, the shark-eyed storekeeper, to his left, Sam Moore, brother-in-law of Cummings, on his right and Jim Whaley, copra trader, between Moore and Stewart. A hard-boiled quartet, each more than a match for Edwards sober, quietly rooking him now as he slobbered over his drinks and muddled with his cards. The pearls, that were to go for diving equipment, had been sold at a fair price to Loo Sing, the dealer.

Sami Kawea, the half-white chum of Edwards, was not present. Tom Cummings prided himself on running a white man's place. The least touch of dark blood barred all except the native girls who waited on the tables and occasionally danced.

So Kawea swaggered it with his own people. Edwards had given him one pearl though Kawea had dived for all of them, made the discovery on his own initiative. But he never doubted the equity of the division. Who was he that he should carry half the purse? He had got six pounds from Sing for his one pearl—it was worth twenty, but Sing never gave a native half as much as a white man—and with it he had purchased a *sulu* of black cashmere, a blue serge coat, candy, tobacco, fresh bread, canned salmon. He had made a feast and Navuni, she of the mischievous eyes, smiled at him. He was well content.

It was not every man of Fijian blood who had a white man for boon companion. Other white men might call *Billi* Edwards beach-bum when he was broke. Then Kawea took him to his kin and Billi sang and showed tricks, made the children laugh, told rare tales to the men, talking Fijian like a native. A great favorite, Billi, especially with the women, and Kawea shone in the reflected light of his glory like the moon the sun. Later on tonight he meant to break away from Navuni and wait outside Tomi Cummings' to watch for Billi, who would be very drunk and perhaps noisy. Afterward he would perhaps be very sick with his heart. Sometimes Kawea thought Billi was going to die after he had drunk a great deal, his face turned a bad color and he could not breathe for pain. But he always got well again.

He expected that Billi would have spent or lost all his money. He usually did. But that was all right though he had more this time than ever before. And, if he had too much money, he would sail away and Kawea would lose his white friend, the pride of his heart. There would be no more wandering about the villages and sailing between the islands in the crazy little sloop, welcomed everywhere as minstrels and funmakers of the beach. If he lost, playing *poka*, Billi would stop in Fiji. They could get more

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pearls where these came from. Kawea would bring them up a few at a time from sixteen fathoms and there were enough there to last for a long time if no one else found out about them. Life would be carefree again.

Kawea would play the guitar and Billi would sing in that comical way of his all the old songs, and some new ones of his own, while the men roared at the double meanings and the girls' eyes sparkled as they put flower wreaths on the musicians and the bowl of *yangona* passed while the smell of roasting food was good in the nostrils. *Eyah!* That was the life. Vagabonds in lotosland the pair of them. That Billi had a wife and children far away, who waited for him and might be going hungry, meant nothing to Kawea. Probably Billi had many wives and many children in many places. There was no one like Billi.

It was Kawea who had told Joni, the beauty man from Tamburi, of the pearls and the boasts of Billi about going back to *Ameriiki*. And, when Gideon and McCord went into Tom Cummings', Joni, who had delivered Lightning back to the place of his hiring, looked up Kawea and, not altogether incidentally, Navuni.

There was no mistaking the red-head of Edwards with the aquiline nose, the loose, humorous mouth, full and none too firm of lip, the blue eyes that were a little watery and sometimes a little vacuous. They had dark pouches under them of slate color that said plainly that Billi's life of wine, women and song, plus the tropics, was taxing his heart too heavily. Now his face was suffused with blood surging through his veins, his brain was fumed with alcohol making it hard for him to speak distinctly, to handle his cards crisply, to do anything quite normally.

All of the others had some of his money. Stewart had more of it than the rest and some of theirs to boot. His imperturbable British face, long and suggesting a horse, showed no hint of chagrin or triumph. The monocle was fixed in it like a window in a wall whenever he dealt or, having got his hand, screwed it into his eye-socket like a challenge, while the distorted orb glared through the lens, revealing nothing, the other eye having a drooping lid. The monocle was jestingly called Stewart's eye opener. Without it they declared he would never summon energy enough to keep his lashes apart. There were rumors that his languor was as affected as his speech.

He was a big man, almost as big as Gideon, bonier, without spare flesh. He was reputed to be as good a swimmer as any native. A crack at tennis when he first arrived in Suva though, of late, he had not been invited up to Government House where the courts were and where the occasional tournaments were held. He and the sleek looking Silva were birds of a feather, two hawks of hazard, living by their wits and the lack of that commodity in others. Sam Moore and Stewart, with Edwards between them, led him into the pots and left him sometimes stranded on the reefs of injudicious betting for Silva or Whaley to plunder. To a shrewd observer this behavior seemed to point to a common division of profits after the bird was plucked. They played against each other with their own money but it didn't matter who won Edwards'. All that was necessary was to keep track of what he lost and divide it by four.

Gideon was a shrewd observer. McCord was an expert. They watched the game for a hand or two and then Edwards called for the drinks. McCord spoke to him and Edwards blinked back at him, frowning prodigiously, striving to summon up some turgid memory.

"Bless my soul," he said at last. "Itsh Andy McCord! Andy, the besh lil pal I ever had. When you arrive, Andy? Sit down 'n have a drink. Mister Gi-gi-gideon, glad to see you. All have a drink. Haven' seen Andy for eight or nine yearsh—an' you know thatsh mighty long time."

He giggled foolishly. He was too befuddled to establish a definite line of connection and communication between McCord and himself. Andy shook his head slightly at Gideon. The other players frowned slightly at the interruption to the game, except Stewart, who screwed in his eyeglass and surveyed McCord with blank insolence.

"Evening, Gideon," he said. "Want to sit in?"

"Not this evening, Stewart," said the planter and his tone carried his opinion of the remittance man quite plainly.

"No? Ah, then it's your deal, Whaley."

"Gimme 'nother stack, Silva," said Edwards. "Lucksh bound to turn. Andy, ol' pal, you lent me money oncesh. Goin'

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to pay you all back. I'm potenshul millionaire, Andy. Tell you all about it tomorrow. Got to keep mind on the carsh. One thing atta time."

He swallowed a glass of neat brandy and his eyes got fixed and glassy. McCord and Gideon stepped back a little.

"No sense in talking to him now," said McCord. "We'll take charge of him later. He's lost most of what he has with him, I imagine. Let him lose the rest. He'll be more apt to listen to reason when he sobers up and finds he's broke. Those chaps are robbing him blind, of course. He can't see his pips. But, if he's found a lagoon?"

Gideon nodded agreement. The deal was played with Edwards shoving in all his newly bought chips for a raise, promptly called by Stewart.

"Busted," announced Edwards thickly. "Busted flat, jush when the cardsh were comin' my way. Loan me a stack, Stewart?"

"On what?"

The remittance man's voice had all the fellowship of the sound of a tool clinking on metal.

"Blast it, you know I've got a lagoon full of pearlsh. You chapsh got five hundred of my money, now."

"Put up your lagoon against that amount, then."

"Thash robbery. Might be million dollarsh in that lagoon."

"And there might not. Quit if you're afraid of your luck."

"Afraid of nothing. But thash robbery. Tell you what I'll do, Stewart. Play you for a cool thousand poundsh. Put up the lagoon against a thousand. Best two hands out of three. Show you if I'm afraid."

He pulled a greasy looking notebook from his pocket.

"Heresh log of the *Annie*," he said, waving it. "*Annie's* name of my sloop, name of my wife. McCord knowsh Annie, dont you Andy, ol' pal? Ought to. She's ——"

"What's in the log?" asked Stewart.

"Posishun of lagoon. See?" He riffled the leaves, showing an entry. "You win, you get the log. 'F you want me shign over my rightsh, do that."

"The figures'll do," said Stewart. "Put up the book. Here's my money. Tom, get us a fresh deck."

"Look here," said McCord, stepping forward. "This man 's not getting a fair deal. If he's brought out pearls worth five hundred pounds the lagoon's worth a lot more than twice that amount."

"You his bally guardian?" asked Stewart. "If not, why not mind your own business? I don't recollect your being invited into this game."

"He doesn't know what he's doing," said Andy.

"No? Don't you, Edwards?"

"You leave me alone, Andy. Jush like you, alwaysh interferin'. Thish my affair. Lemme 'lone."

He slammed the notebook in the middle of the table with the pile of gold and notes that Stewart had assembled. Cummings brought the new deck and Stewart opened it, stripping off a revenue stamp, running through the cards, throwing out the joker, spreading the cards face down, deftly as a prestidigitator. Gideon stood beside McCord, his face troubled.

"All right," said McCord suddenly. "None of my business—so far."

The eyes of the little man, so much like blue agate-ware in his reddened face, were hard and cold. He appeared to accept the situation, since he could not control it. A man's own drunkenness was his own affair.

"Draw for deal. Low card," said Stewart tersely.

It was notable that the other three players made no demur. That they were antagonistic to McCord was already evident. They watched the progress of the play with keenly placid faces.

Edwards had difficulty in picking up his card. He fumbled it as if it had been as thick as a sandwich and displayed a seven. Stewart turned up a four. His monocle swung on a cord and he stuck it into place as he flipped out the ten cards. Edwards got two jacks, an ace, an eight and a five, discarding the two last, holding up the ace as a kicker. Stewart drew three cards against his two and showed down three queens. Edwards had caught another ace. Ordinary hands enough.

Edwards misdealt but retained the deck. He drew his five cards to the edge of the table for better handling with his clumsy fingers. There were four clubs and the king of diamonds. The top club was also a king but he discarded the diamond to catch the flush. And got it against Stewart's two small pairs.

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"Even Stevensh," he said. "Lucksh with me. Your deal, Stewart."

The cards flowed into Stewart's hands and out of them again for the deciding hand. Edwards called for another drink. Suddenly he seemed drowsy but the liquor spurred him and he chuckled as he saw his hand. He had three tens.

"Drawing down to these," he said as Stewart tossed in three to the discard. "Gimme jush one more like these, ol' top. I'm taking two cards."

His head fell forward on his chest as he tried to pick up his draw and he recovered with a jerk. The blue veins stood out enormously on his hands and the side of his neck.

"I've got threes myself," said Stewart calmly though his eye gleamed through the monocle. "If you caught you win. Mine are aces."

Edwards spilled his cards.

"—— funny," he said. "Can't see what I got. Andy——"

He had failed to better his hand. Whaley told him so as Stewart sat unsmiling, the stakes still ungathered.

"You lose," said Whaley.

"Lose?" Edwards' voice suddenly shrilled. He seemed instantly sobered aware of the magnitude of his loss. "What have you got, Stewart?"

He half-rose and leaned over the table, peering at the cards. Suddenly he swayed, gave a gasping cry and crashed back in his chair, slid to the ground.

"Look out for him, Gideon," cried McCord.

Stewart, unperturbed, reached for the stakes as Gideon, surprized at McCord's apparent desertion of his friend, lifted the prostrate man, helped by Whaley. Cummings hurried forward and they took Edwards out of the stuffy room into the air. Stewart, with his deft fingers, ran through the leaves of the little book, gave a little grunt of satisfaction and tucked the log away in a side pocket while starting to gather in the money.

"Just a minute, you cheap crook," said McCord. "We'll have a look at those cards first." He picked them up with motions as swift as Stewart's and stowed them away in his own coat.

"Hand over that book," he said. "Rang in a cold deck on him, didn't you? I don't know whether they're shaved or marked. I'll know after I've tried out that glass of yours."

THE players were all standing. Silva narrowed his eyes and folded his arms across his chest. Whaley was outside with Gideon. Moore stepped back, watching Stewart, who gazed unbelieving at the sudden challenge of McCord. There was a moment of tension with the little man in dominance. Stewart's monocle dropped to the end of its cord. McCord reached suddenly across the table and snapped it off. The big Britisher jumped for him. Silva's right hand had slid inside his coat.

McCord leaped in, shoving the table violently against Silva, upsetting it, sending the Portuguese staggering back. Stewart's driving blow went wild as the little man ducked and sent a punch traveling upward, short and hard, straight to the mark. Stewart went down in a heap and McCord jumped back.

A gun was in his hand as he whirled and faced Silva, an automatic that pointed a wicked muzzle at both Silva and Moore.

"Knife or gun, keep it there," said McCord crisply. "Put up your hands both of you," he added, as Gideon came hurrying in and, sensing the row, barred the door against Cummings and Whaley.

"Hold on, gentlemen," he drawled. "Wait a minute."

Gideon was a power in Suva. Cummings was running his place on sufferance strongly tinged with suspicion. He halted Whaley.

Two native girls ran screaming to a corner. McCord backed against the vacated bar. There were three more men in the place and he warned them, taking the cards from his pocket with one hand and spreading them out on the bar while his gun still covered the room.

"Shut that door and bolt it, Gideon, will you?" he asked.

Gideon obeyed and came forward, his face grave.

"Take my gun, Gideon, and make these folks behave while I demonstrate. The Spigotty over there has got something tucked away in a shoulder-sheath. Three-Eyes'll be coming to in a minute.

"I'm breaking you three gents in as witnesses. Edwards was drunk to begin with. So they may not have cheated at first, though two of 'em had him sandwiched to

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tilt him and the play was all for the sucker money.

"But we'll let the regular game go. Call the money lost fair and square. When the big stake went up it was too good to let go. I'm betting it was all fixed to bring it up and that the cut was to be four ways.

"When this chap Stewart gave me the glassy look he tipped himself off. I've seen his stunt before. That glass—I'll let you look at it in a minute—is a high magnifier. Wear it and screw up the other eye and you're like a jeweler dipping into a watch. You can see card markings on the back pattern with it that no one else can make out. Stewart's call for a new deck meant a cold one. I don't know who fixed it but it's easy enough to steam off a revenue stamp and stick it on again after the cards are doped up. If I'm wrong, I'll apologize all round.

"Stay where you belong, Stewart," he called to the fallen man, beginning to come to. "Be a wise lad. I'm not through with you yet."

He inspected some of the cards through the magnifying monocle, finding the right focus.

"Take a look, gents," he invited the men who had not been in the game.

They came toward the bar curiously, mindful of the gun in the firm hand of Gideon.

"The markings are in the corners inside the ornament," said McCord. "This Stewart always stuck in his glass when he dealt. Handled the pasteboards mighty pretty with his long fingers. Drew a low card for deal and that gave him two out of three. Knew every card that went through his paws and helped himself according from the bottom of the deck. You satisfied?"

The three men nodded. They were of the same crude caliber as the usual crowd that patronised Cummings none too reputable place. They lacked the cleverness or the initiative of Stewart or Silva and they were awed by the manner in which the short stranger had suddenly taken the ascendancy, the swift blow with which he had knocked out the burly Britisher, the lightning appearance of the gun that had forestalled Silva's attack.

"O.K.," said McCord. "I'm turning over these cards and the spy-glass to Mr. Gideon here in case we use 'em later on. Point is that Stewart has no right to that book. Get up and hand it over."

Stewart got up slowly, his pale blue eyes wicked.

"Just why do *you* claim it?" he asked. "Where's Edwards. Let him ask for it if he wants it."

"Edwards is dead, Stewart," said Gideon. "Heart went back on him when he realized he'd lost everything. Liquor had something to do with it, he'd have gone some time before very long but you aggravated it with your crookedness."

"You'd have a bit of a hard time making a legal charge out of that, I fancy."

McCord looked sharply at Gideon.

"Bill's dead—that's straight?"

Gideon nodded. Andy McCord half closed his eyes for a moment, pursing his lips, shaking his own head.

"No law to get at you for that, you crook," he said with acid contempt against which Stewart was apparently proof. "No use bringing the cards into court. I reckon they know what you are here in Suva. We'll settle all that here and now. Bill Edwards has been digging his own grave, I guess, but you gave him a shove into it."

"Just what do you propose to do about it? The man is dead. That pearl location belongs to anybody. You're not representing his ghost, are you?"

There was no trace of languor about Stewart now. His eyes were wide open and he seemed to be either indifferent to McCord's anger despite the knockdown blow he had received, or deliberately taunting him to another encounter, sure of his own ability, relying on weight and height, on reach and cleverness.

"I'm representing his widow, you yellow-bellied skunk," said McCord. "You come across with that book or I'll take it away from you."

"Ah, will you, really? And I suppose you'll think all the more of the widow if she's a bally heiress. What? Want the book, do you? Come and take it. And don't make any bluffs with a gun. If you shoot me, my son, I'm a British subject and not all the pull of your friend Gideon—who is still an American—will get you out of Suva jail until they put you up for trial."

It was true enough though the confident insolence of the man was almost unbearable. They could not charge him with the death of Edwards. The marked cards episode was a matter outside the sympathy of the government. On the other hand,

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the shooting of a British subject, even if that subject was listed as a good deal of a blackguard, was to attack the sacred rights of an Englishman on British soil. An American stranger would be rigorously held and tried by the Governor of Fiji who was also the High Commissioner of the Western Pacific, holding jurisdiction over all British subjects living in groups owned by Britain, or even in those not so owned. Silva and Moore grinned at each other in appreciation of Stewart's cool summing up of the situation.

"I haven't bluffed you with a gun, Stewart," said McCord slowly. "If I have to use one on you it 'll be to bend it over your head. But I won't need it. Where's the book, you horse-faced piker? Come across."

The personal taunt seemed to get under the skin of Stewart. He squared his shoulders, took deep breath and his hands curled into fists.

"You got into me last time," he said. "This time I'll take you over my knee."

"Look here, McCord," started Gideon anxiously. The little man grinned at him.

"You watch this. This is going to be good," he said. "I'm going to make that big stiff look like a hog in a slaughter-house before I'm through with him. The bigger they are the harder they fall. I'm going to trim him and plant him and, when I take the book away from him, he won't know a thing about it. Never a cheat yet that wasn't a coward. He'll squirt yellow with the first good punch."

He winked swiftly at Gideon though he was keenly watching Stewart. The planter felt a curious security about the little man, enormous though the discrepancy was between the two. Stewart had at least seven inches in height the better of it, at least fifty pounds betterment in weight. He was a man who prided himself on his athletic development and kept fairly fit. And he was a good boxer.

Gideon guessed what McCord was after with his derisive banter—trying to break up Stewart's control. He decided to act as an unsolicited referee, to interfere if McCord got much the worst of it. His own veins tingled with a desire to mix it with the remittance man. McCord, he guessed, intended to work out his emotions concerning Bill Edwards—lying now in a little thatched lean-to with Gideon's handkerchief over his waxen face—upon the living body of the Britisher. Whether he was going to get the book was another matter. Still Gideon, entirely aside from patriotic reasons, would have placed his money on McCord.

Stewart was taking no chances in leaving a wide opening and McCord presented him with one, holding out his right hand for the book.

The big Britisher made a vicious chop at the extended forearm with his own left and drove hard and suddenly for McCord's head with his right. He was speedy, galvanized into concerted action but Andy McCord was quicker. He ducked, avoided the chopping blow, sent his left rattling at the other's ribs. The head drive slid harmlessly across his left shoulder while his right fist drummed over Stewart's heart. Even as the bigger man clutched for him he was away.

Just as the smaller and smarter ships of Stewart's own nation had run in beneath the guns of the high-pooped galleys of Spain in Armada days, sending round shot, cold and hot, between wind and water while their opponents wildly blasted the air above them, so McCord offset the greater reach of Stewart. Once inside the other's guard or the lash of his powerful blows he smashed home a rapid rub-a-dub on belly and lower ribs, marking for the plexus, hammering the heart, malleting now and then on the kidneys.

He did not go scot free. Stewart's connecting blows sent him bounding but he went with them and came back again. They hurt but they never landed fairly and his face was unmarked, his vital spots always covered. The little man seemed to curl up like a hedgehog whenever a smash started, catching them on shoulder and elbow or the top of his skull. And always out of the crouch two arms would lash, ripping in with vicious thumps to the mid-section.

Stewart began to puff, to fight the elusive little man with an open mouth. He found it a good deal like striking a punching-bag, well inflated. He rushed time and time, scooping with one arm to get hold of his antagonist, using the other to guard the blows that were sure to come from some unexpected angle. Once let him grip him—once let him land a solid blow——

He was getting arm-heavy, his shoes

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seemed soled with lead and still the indomitable and tantalizing McCord, like a machine of steel and whalebone and rubber, came in and went dancing out; buffeted, rolling with the punch, coming back as smartly as the toy mannikins mounted on half a bullet that cannot be knocked over but come up smiling. And this mannikin hit like the kick of a mule.

McCord was talking to him—the little blighter—saying things unprintable though often used in the ring—things that roused Stewart slowly to a blind rage that he could not resent them, things that were pungently to the point and many of them true. He had no wind himself for answer if he had possessed the aptitude. There were foul enough places in his mind, foul enough method in his fighting but he was belted with bruises—he could only get half-lungsful of air.

McCord looked straight up at him and jeered, his face unmarked, the bright, hard blue eyes lit with success.

"You're such a *rotten* crook," said McCord—only he didn't put it quite that way—"that you can't even *hit* straight."

With a flush of strength Stewart drove a bludgeon blow direct to the grinning mark. This time he wasn't going to miss it, triumph flashed in his brain as the blow went home—but not upon the features of the little man, crushing his nose, pulping his face, but high on the frontal bone, with broken knuckles driven back, pain shooting up his arm and a swift sense of goneness, of the nausea that comes with paralysis of control; gasping for breath as Andy McCord whacked home to the diaphragm.

Stewart went tottering back, his face gray with agony and McCord, leaping like a wildcat, struck at his face, bludgeoning his man back to the wall where Stewart lolled, practically defenceless while McCord used his face as a chopping-block with well-planned, well-directed, twisting-fisted blows.

The Britisher's arms hung limp. It was pitiless butchery of the horse-face that gave out blood as a squeezed orange gives juice. It dripped on his white drill and on the floor as he stood shouldered to the wall, swaying like an inverted pendulum as McCord stepped back at last, watching for the fall. Stewart's eyes were lifeless as those of a dead fish, closing and bruised. Suddenly he fell forward with a crash, out on his feet, falling like a shoved over log without even the subconscious reflex of arms flung out to break his fall. The room was silent.

"I told him I'd make a hog of him," said McCord, the light of battle still in his eyes. He stooped and took the notebook away from the prostrate, motionless body. "Anybody got any objections?" he asked. "If they have we'll go into the matter."

He was breathing a little hard but his chest rose and fell evenly. He had his own inner knowledge of stiffness coming tomorrow, here and there, on muscles not too often used of late years. But, as he stood, lightly poised, it seemed little short of a miracle to the frequenters of the place that he could have whipped Stewart, whose prowess they had hitherto profoundly respected. They transferred a lot of that respect to the little man who faced them.

It was no miracle to McCord. His attitude testified to his accepting victory as a foregone conclusion—now verified.

"You got anything to say, Spigotty?" he shot at Silva.

The Portuguese licked dry lips. A bullet wound, a knife slash, he could understand, even appreciate, but, to see a man painted a horrible object lesson with his own blood, by a fighting devil half his size—that was not pleasant.

McCord nodded a little grimly. He was in the mood to have given Silva a lacing. He had not forgotten the latter's intent to throw a knife into him, nor forgiven it.

"Then we'll be moving, Gideon," he said. "Got to look after Bill."

IN THE tropics the dead are soon buried. Perhaps the chief mourner at the funeral of Bill Edwards was Kawea. Through his effort the crumbly, sun-baked dirt of the grave on the side-hill overlooking the sea was banked high with fragrant flowers. When Gideon touched him on the shoulder he turned on them a face gaunt with grief and fasting, his dark eyes wet with tears.

"This," said Gideon to him in Fijian, indicating McCord, "is Makkordi, friend of Billi and of his wife. He is the man who gave Stuariti such a beating, because Stuariti cheated Billi at cards, that now Stuariti stays within the house, blind and bruised.

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He wants to have a talk with you, Kawea. Will you come to Tamburi this evening with Joni? He will get horses."

Kawea looked at Makkordi with interest. Some of the sadness went out of his face. The beating of Stewart was already a native chant, a saga of Suva. And horses! Kawea could see himself riding a horse. Navuni should see him too. That would settle the pretensions of Joni, the beauty man. Only—Joni would be riding a horse too. Still—he would go to Tamburi.

It was not lack of real affection but the emotions of a South Sea native change more swiftly, from tears to laughter, grief to joy, from hatred to love, than that of the ordinary child. Their shallow minds reflect only the present. Kawea, living as a native, was half-white more by name than nature.

Gideon and McCord went to the cable office, the latter sending a message to San Francisco by way of Fanning Island.

"I'll put up a headstone," he said, "after I get those pearls. I suppose half of 'em belong to Kawea, by rights. But I'll be hanged if I let Stewart and his gang touch one of 'em. He got a look at those figures in the notebook before I could get at him. I wonder if he remembers 'em distinctly after that licking."

"I'm wonderin' yet, suh, without any discredit to yo' prowess, how you outfought a man heavier than you by mo' than fo'ty pounds an' said to be a good boxer."

"You told the reason in the last word. He was too sure of himself. He was mad at me copping him the first time and wanted to show me in a hurry he was the best man. I got him madder by tellin' him just the kind of a bilking crook he was. That's an old trick.

"He's a boxer, you say. I used to be a fighter. And he fought like one of those slowed-down movies. You could see a blow coming a mile. I had him off balance all the way to the finish. Put the two of us in a cellar and he might have half murdered me. And he might not. He'll try an' get even an' the best way to do that will be to get those pearls. He won't if I have to swim there.

"If Bill got down there with this Kawea I guess I can. There's his boat—I suppose I can use it. Get Kawea to go with me. I reckon he found the place first, anyhow, from what you say.

"I'm no sailor. All I know about a boat is that it's a got two ends. And I'm no millionaire, Gideon. I make money an' spend it the same way—easy. If I hadn't caught a twenty-to-one shot an' bought right in the mutuals I'd never have been here. Meant to come. This long shot came home an' I bought my ticket for the steamer quick. There was one leaving right off or I might have lost my roll the next day. Didn't even see Annie before I sailed. Left a letter for her.

"Looks like I arrived just in time. And I ain't goin' back empty-handed. Though I've got no spare cash to hire a regular sailing and diving outfit."

"Good man," said Gideon. "Stewart 'll try to get the pearls, of course. But he'll be in bed fo' a day or so. Gad, suh, I wouldn't have missed that fight fo' ha'f of Tamburi. Let's go to the club till it gets cool. I've introduced mint to the steward.

"There's one or two things I don't understand about how Billy Edwards got those pearls. According to the chart that island is Motunui. There's two of 'em close together. Motunui and Motulele—means Big Boat and Little Boat.

"White men don't go there any more. Both islands hostile. One time the chief's nephew got recruited and died on the plantation. The natives evened that up with half a dozen white men's heads off a schooner that happened to hit the reef. Then a poor —— of a trader settled there, started a station for copra and gave them some salmon with ptomaine in the cans. He didn't know it, naturally. But they figured he meant to poison them and his head went up in the club-house. That was three years ago. No white man's cared to land there, so far. Unless Edwards and Kawea did and got away somehow.

"It's an independent island—was before the war anyway. But we'll see what Kawea's got to say about it. Edwards may have been plain lying. He had a habit of bragging —not wishin' to say anything against the dead, suh, or your friend."

"He wasn't so bad," said McCord judicially. "But he didn't have responsibility enough in his system to look after tame rabbits, let alone a wife and kids. He may have been a drifter, but he was a clean sport. He wouldn't have put up those figures if they hadn't been straight."

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They rode up to Tamburi in the cool of the evening. Kawea proud on his steed, his grief, for the time at least, forgotten. Navuni had seen him mounted and her fickle fancy had vaned towards him again.

Conversation at the club, where McCord found himself somewhat of a celebrity and the talk, turned on Edwards and his pearl lagoon, brought out confirmation of what the planter had said. It seemed generally accepted that Edwards had stretched the truth. McCord combated that.

The dead, according to the beliefs of Kawea's people, should not be lamented after the proper ritual had been observed or the gods might be displeased and the spirit sent back to haunt the over sentimental. Therefore he appeared on the veranda in fairly cheerful mood.

Gideon and McCord sat with a Great Circle Sailing Chart in front of them where the planter had indicated the two islands, surrounded by the dotted indications of reefs. A Sailing Directory had not given much additional information, save that there was a passage through the reef at Motunui, and good holding ground inside at twelve fathoms, deeper water in an inlet.

Joni, bringing fresh water, ice and mint, ushered in Kawea, lingering wistfully until dismissed. Gideon gave the half-white a drink of whisky.

"Kawea," he said, speaking Beach-English for the benefit of McCord. "Those pearl you find along with Billi belong some of them along you, rest belong along Mary, wife of Billi, belong along his children. Billi he like his Mary she get those pearl. She too plenty poor.

"Stuariti he like catch those pearl too. Savvy? Kawea, which island you go with Billi. Motunui? Motulele?"

"Motunui."

"How you fix you go along that Motunui no find trouble? Plenty *kaikanak* (cannibal) along that place. No like white man. How you fix you catch pearl, come back?"

Kawea showed all his teeth. The white man asked him something that he knew and they did not. He ached to show the fulness of that superiority.

"One time plenty trouble," he said. "No trouble now. Motunui that *tapu* island. One time plenty kanaka there eat *samani* (salmon). Plenty quick they die. That *tembe-bembe*—all same devil-devil. Then one time that *mauta* (mountain) along Motunui make too much smoke, too much fire."

He illustrated his talk with gestures, thoroughly enjoying himself. They could almost see the spouting fire, the curling smoke, the flowing lava, the island in the throes of a convulsion.

"Motunui all same boat in bad sea," he went on. "Too much rock. Now she not so big. She sink mebbe two, three fathom. Those *kanaka* along that place not like that. They go along Motulele. Kill all *kanaka* on Motulele. *Kaikai* those Motulele *kanaka*. Take women.

"But they no go back along Motunui while that *mauta* smoke. Now they call that place Motuiri (Smoke Island). One Mary God along that *mauta*. Her name *Pere*. She too much angry along some thing. Mebbe some day she not breathe so black. She sleep. Then those *kanaka* come back. Now that place plenty *tapu*.

"I take Billi along there in sloop. We come there night, we go away night. They no see, they no savvy. Suppose they savvy, mebbe they not like. Come in canoe. I savvy all that. We too smart along of them."

He looked longingly at the bottle and Gideon gave him another jigger of it.

"How you find that island first time, Kawea," he asked. "After you find, Billi, he put down in book. How you savvy take him there."

"Huh. My mother, her mother, she come from Motulele in big canoe one time. I savvy star, savvy wind, savvy which way water walk along. Plenty I savvy."

"He means he knows how far to sail on certain winds with certain stars as pointers. Knows the currents, too. Some of them are great navigators. They know what constellations rise month by month as well as the almanac."

McCord nodded. Kawea grinned at the big words of Gideon that told of his greatness. The liquor was warm in his belly.

"Suppose you come along of us, Kawea, I see you get pearl. I fix it so you get money all time along those pearl. No let you spend it all one time, savvy? You come back, you find Mary, you be big man."

"Eyah!" Kawea saw visions of himself and Navuni, a sewing machine, a bicycle, a lamp with a red shade. Squareface gin, tobacco, candy. "Eyah!"

"I come," he said. "When you go?"

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"Tomorrow, I think. Better you stay along of us at Tamburi till we go."

"One girl I like to see."

Gideon thought for a moment.

"All right," he said finally. "You no talk along Joni, no talk along nobody, Kawea. Savvy? You stay away from Stuariti, Silva, Mori, Whaley. No good those men."

"Plenty I savvy. Stuariti, he plenty sick, Makkaordi he fix."

He beamed on McCord, chuckling.

"Plenty pearl along Motunui, Kawea?" asked Gideon.

"Plenty. I savvy pearl. Some we get, plenty we leave. Too many pearl along that place. Billi he want come Suva, go back, stay mebbe one month. One month I fill that glass along of pearl."

He pointed to one of the tall tumblers. Instantly both men had a vision of gleaming gems—a fortune. They looked at one another.

"Fine pearl—big pearl," Kawea went on. "Like those we bring."

He left with a third drink inside of him, happy.

"Kawea may be exaggerating a bit," said Gideon. "But he's a good diver. One of the best. He could earn all kinds of money that way but he's too blame lazy, or independent, or both. He knows pearls, suh. A man like Kawea can save a lot of time and money to an outfit. He'll dive and pick the likely patches, swim round like a fish an' locate the sick oysters, knows where to look fo' them.

"I had to let him go an' see this girl. He'd have gone anyway. A fortune don't mean to him what it does to a white man. He don't know how to spend it and, when it's gone, he's able to go on livin' just the same way, workin' now and then fo' some tobacco or a drink and the rest of the time living with the natives.

"We may never see him again before we start. So long as Stewart don't get hold of him and beat us to a start."

"You've left me at the barrier," said McCord. "Talkin' about goin' to start tomorrow. Us, you said. I realise that while Kawea might take me down there the pair of us wouldn't amount to worms in a bird's nest against that gang of Stewart's in a real scrap. They'll be usin' guns next time. It ain't only that they've got a grudge against me, if the pearls are what Kawea says, there's a fortune down there to fight over. And the best of men 'll fight like a cat in a sack for the money to put 'em on Easy Street. Now, when you say *us*——"

"I mean you an' me, suh, if you've no objection. Outside of Lem Watt's desirin' I should treat you as I would him, outside of my own esteem fo' you, suh, I'd consider it a favor to me—an' I may be of some use.

"I've never landed on either of those islands and I'm sort of retired as a skipper but I can qualify and I need a tonic. Gettin' too blame fat, body an' mind. You've stirred me up a bit. Now then: It's between seasons. There are some boats we can get hold of. There's a power-boat belonging to the Kiwue Plantation I might get or there's the schooner *Seabird*—got an engine in it. Belongs to a friend of mine. Matter of fact I spoke about 'em up at the club yesterday. Doubtful about the power boat, know I can get the *Seabird*. I can get her cook and three of her crew. Good men kept through the slack season. I've got three of my old crew here at Tamburi. Samoans. Fighting men. They've stuck with me but they'll be mighty glad to go. Fertilising vanila blossoms ain't exactly a job fo' a red-blooded warrior.

"There's a chap I can get hold of fo' mate who's reliable. With Kawea, an' Joni as steward, makes up a complement of twelve. Won't cost a cent above expenses —wages, stores, boat charter fo' a month, gasoline an' ammunition. You can pay fo' all of that out of the pearls we get. If we don't get any, don't worry about that. It's a gamble. We'll have a good time, suh, an' a little excitement thrown in. Charge up the old wine of life, suh. Tuhn the confounded grape-juice into champagne. Egad, suh, the idea of it peels the age off me. I've got barnacles an' weed on me stayin' ashore so long. Will you let me in on it?"

The planter's eyes shone. So did his face. He responded to the idea of action like an old-time fire-horse to the alarm, McCord thought.

"I can't afford to let you out of it," he said. "You'll share in with what we find; fifty-fifty."

"What share are you individually takin' out fo' yourself, suh?"

"Me? Oh, that's different. I'm interested in Bill's widow and her kids. Bill

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didn't leave a will but she's sure entitled to his estate. If we find a million I might take out my expenses and a commission."

The planter rose up, floridly indignant.

"And do you think fo' one moment, suh, that I would reduce the estate of the widow an' the fatherless who have been scrapin' along the best they could on account of a loose-ended scallawag, while I've been livin' off the fat of the land here at Tamburi, the fat of the land, suh, includin' juleps! I may not be a marryin' man, suh, but I don't forget my obligations as a man towards a woman, suh. The obligation to protect the mothers of the race; and, ——, McCord, don't you try to make me out any less chivalrous than you, suh, confound you.

"I'm getting my share from bein' stirred up out of stagnation. Retrograded, that's what I've done. Used to handle a tiller on a ship an' now I till the soil. I'm the man with the hoe—hirin' some one else to do the hoein'. I used to take chances every week of my life up to seven years ago when I settled on Tamburi. I've got the old itch. Hang it, suh, you know how to snuggle a gun yo'se'f. You've talked about trailin' deserts. You and I 'll get a heap of fun out of this befo' we're through—it's mo' than likely."

"I wouldn't mind," said McCord. "I've bucked a good many queer games and I've always had an itch myself to see what the wild and hairy side of the South Seas was like. I'm getting a kick out of this. I hate to go stale, same as you do."

"Same as any man with guts, suh. I've got my eyes an' my teeth an' me stomach's still workin'. Little shy on wind but there's action stowed away in me yet and, by thunder, we'll get it. It's agreed, is it?"

"Hold on, just a minute," said McCord. "I'm from the northeast corner of Ireland, pretty close to being Scotch. Let's kid ourselves for a minute. We'll say Kawea's on the mark with his talk of the pearls. Say there's a fortune.

"Bill's dead. I recovered his notebook after he'd been bilked out of it. Then you come in and put up a stake in furnishing the boat and your experience. I know what Bill's widow wants to do. She ain't the kind to lie around no matter how rich she turned out to be. She's a wonder growing flowers. She wants a hot-house and aims to supply San Francisco with orchids. Give her fifty thousand dollars and she'd be fixed.

"Now then—up to fifty thousand net for her, taking out all expenses and for Kawea's share, because he was a partner of Bill's when you come down to it, and showed him the pearls in the first place; up to that fifty thousand net, you and me draw nothing—if that'll suit your chivalry. Anything over that split—net—three ways; Annie, you an' me."

"It's dry work arguing, suh," said Gideon. "Let's have a nightcap. I'll accept yo' terms if the lady herse'f eventually subscribes to 'em."

There was a twinkle in the planter's eyes as he mixed the final julep. He held an idea that the widow would not object to McCord sharing her good fortune in a very general way, especially since he had retrieved it for her. As for his own share—which he did not need—arguing, as he had said, was dry work.

"Here, suh, is to the lady, God bless her."

They drank the toast standing—bottoms up.

STEWART, lying with bruised and aching body that enclosed a battered conceit and a festering hatred for the man who had bested him, blinked through his swollen lids with bloodshot eyes at the sun that persisted through the blinds of his room at the Moana House.

McCord had made a good guess when he wondered whether the beating Stewart had suffered had not affected his definite recollection of the figures in the log book.

He lay on his hot, uncomfortable bed beneath the stifling mosquito curtain cursing silently but volubly. The room was noxious with stale tobacco smoke, with the dregs of stale liquors consumed by his three partners, Silva, Moore and Whaley who pretended to commiserate with him—curse them again—and all the time secretly laughed at his plight and his downfall and discussed it with all Suva.

Now they were out for the morning meal and not one of them had seen to it that he had a drink handy—a young coconut, with a slug of gin in it—not one of them, and not a house-boy within hearing. There was no bell anyway and his throat hurt him. That —— McCord—might he take his own place in —— without delay—had struck

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him full on the Adam's apple more than once.

The figures—that he had played for, cheated for and paid for. What were they? He had seen them clearly enough on the page. They had registered in his brain but the coordination had been broken up. They mocked at him and eluded him.

A hundred and sixty-two west; one-six-two-forty-seven west. Was that it? Or was it One-four-seven—? And the latitude? Twenty-something-nineteen south. Or nineteen-something? Or——?

It was no use. There was a short circuit somewhere. It might connect when he got healed up from his bruises. And he couldn't wait until then. Edwards' pal, McCord, and that interfering Gideon would be off without delay to get the pearls.

Stewart had seen the gems Billy Edwards had sold the Chinaman. It would not take many like that to put him on Easy Street, back home again—at least in Europe. If he ever returned to England it would have to be as a stranger and there lay the sting of the only shame that ever vexed him. But, with the loot of a lagoon, he could have a rare time at Mentone, at Nice, at Monte Carlo. He could see himself punting at the *douzaines*, bringing down quartering-pigeons while men and women—especially the women—applauded. How often he had established that mirage to help himself through parlous times.

Now he was on Uneasy Street. He knew the Governor was quite willing to give him warning to leave British territory on the first good excuse and that cables and wireless messages would back up that action. The French colonies had already barred him. He was down to making chums out of Silva, the Spigotty crook, with Moore and Whaley, he who had been received at the best of exclusive clubs half-way around the world.

If they thought—those three—that Stewart had forgotten the figures—they would go and get hold of Kawea who had piloted Edwards in the first place—and leave Stewart flat. So would he do with them when he got the chance, —— them! They might do that anyway, if they considered it, save that the figures were safer, and provided the means of steering a closer course and a swifter one than Kawea's roundabout methods of star-gazing.

So—they must get hold of Kawea—but for another reason—a plausible one enough—because Kawea was an expert diver, knew the lagoon already. That would do. Once aboard, cleared from Suva, it wouldn't matter whether they knew he'd gulled them or not. The figures might come back into his mind. Anyway, he'd come back himself in a day or two—long before they reached the island.

If McCord was there—or, if McCord came later——?"

His mind, already inflamed by fever, plotted venomous murder against McCord, a revenge only to be foregone by the acquisition of wealth. Then he wouldn't bother about any one but Stewart. He'd fool them all. If ever McCord came across his path he'd deal with him but, if he won in this deal, he'd slip away to Europe and leave Silva, Moore and Whaley to hold an empty bag.

They'd do the same to him—leaving him alone like this—in a furnace.

One-four-three? One-four-two? Or was it one-seven-four? That was it? One-seven-four-two-something. But was it?

Suppose they got a hundred thousand dollars worth of gems? Not a bad stake. Not much split in four, though. Split—with those hounds who had gone out laughing and smoking? He couldn't smoke. Throat hurt too much. Too dry.

The door opened and his three partners came in.

"We have been to that funeral, Stewart," said Silva. "That accursed Gideon spoke to Kawea. We should get hold of him."

"Why? We've got the position. For —— sake give me something to drink and some lotion for my eyes. You're a lot of heartless swine, the three of you!"

Whaley gave him what he wanted. Silva went on.

"For the diving. This Kawea is an expert diver, my friend."

"Oh, all right. Then get him. Listen. He's got a girl at Nguilae, that's half-way between here and Tamburi. He'll be seeing her sooner or later. If you think he's going to be useful get hold of him there. Make him drunk, promise him a million, or kidnap him. If he's a good diver that's what Gideon will be wanting him for. We'll fool them and help ourselves at the same time. When do you sail, Silva?"

"I'm always ready to sail," said the Portuguese. "Tonight, if we get Kawea.

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If not, tomorrow. Gideon will have to get a boat. He will have to get a crew, to put on stores, water, everything. We will leave first, my friend."

"Good work," said Stewart. He had put over his point beautifully. Easy to gull these coarser types. Without Kawea he would have been stumped.

The first to arrive at the island would have no trouble in holding off later comers. They could command the lagoon with rifle-fire—prevent them landing at all. Luck was turning his way at last. No more hanging around water-front places, from cheap tavern to cheaper dive, losing gradually all shreds of respect.

"One of you better go up to Ngurilae," he said. "The girl's name is Nuvina and Edwards told me she wasn't half bad. Said he'd have gone out for her himself if it had been any one else but Joni."

"All right," said Moore, "we'll match for it. We got to get Kawea."

GIDEON was unable to get the power-boat and the *Seabird* was decided upon and duly chartered. She was out of commission and needed some overhauling besides the stores. It was a busy day for the planter and McCord, inexperienced as the latter was in such sea matters, yet sufficiently efficient to lend a hand. The mate had to be rounded up, with the seamen and the cook, persuaded to make the trip. There was some trouble with the engine which McCord volunteered to look out for.

He marveled at the executive ability and activity displayed by Gideon. McCord had held preconceived ideas about the general lack of energy of the average Southerner, and he had further discounted this by the enervating effects of a long sojourn in a tropical climate which had already affected himself—not exactly with languor—but with a good deal of discomfort under exertion.

But Gideon, he told himself, as he wrestled in the oven of a cabin on the *Seabird* with the perverse engine, was a hustler.

Gideon ordered the stores, checked them, playing skipper and supercargo in one. He commandeered ice from the club and arranged about it various bottles and a plentiful supply of mint.

"Ice, suh," he said, "is too sca'ce to use fo' ordinary food. But it will serve, while it lasts, to ensure the best flavor of the juleps."

Now, while McCord sweated, Gideon was overhauling the little armory they had brought from Tamburi, inspecting, oiling, counting ammunition.

"We'll get out on the first of the flood," he said. "About ten o'clock or an hour before midnight. How are you coming with the engine?"

"I've got the trouble located. Gasoline come off yet?"

"We'll go ashore and look after it. I ordered a hundred and fifty gallons. Enough for six hundred miles. Kerosene if we can't get gas. And we'll see if Kawea has shown up. Joni's to meet him. We'll not wait fo' him. Not fo' any one, suh."

"Where's Silva's boat?" asked McCord. "You said he had one."

"He has, suh. A faster boat than this in most winds. But no engine. It's getting on to monsoon time and the wind is shifty. We're bound to meet calms between here and Motunui. That's where we'll best Silva. His schooner's out nearer the heads. Silva's game is smuggling—anything, from men to opium. He's been caught—and fined—but he's a slippery coon. Ah, there's the rain."

The sunshine was suddenly cut off. The blue water turned to slate as seen through the cabin ports and the hard patter of rain fell on the deck like the rattle of pellets from a shot-tower.

"Were you expecting it?" asked McCord. "Looked fine enough to me."

"One shower a day in Suva, suh. Regular as winding a clock. It'll clear up soon and we'll have good weather and a wind."

The downpour increased—deafening on deck, blotting out the harbor shores. McCord finished readjusting bolts and stood up, dripping with sweat and smeared with grease.

"I'd give a good deal for a bath," he said.

"You can get one at the club," said Gideon. "How's that fo' mint, suh? Picked that myself befo' sun-up this mo'nin'."

As soon as the rain ceased, as suddenly as it had started, they were rowed ashore. The sky was cloudless, a gorgeous sunset making. They found Joni but no Kawea.

"Some one say they see that *kapa-haore*

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too much drunk," announced the new steward of the *Seabird*, important in a new scarlet *sulu*, a white singlet patterned like a porous plaster, a black belt and a black ribbon with the word "steward" on it in gold letters, bound about his frizzy locks. "I go Nguilae," Joni went on. "Nuvina too much mad along of Kawea because he go away, she say. I think because Kawea not have more money to give her. She all same other *fahine* that girl. So Kawea he get drunk. No can find."

"Keep on looking, Joni. We're having eating ashore at the club. You be aboard nine o'clock. Suppose you no there I catch you and I skin you—savvy?"

"I be along that time all right. I plenty look see along that Kawea."

"You can't depend much on a native," said Gideon, "but a half-white's liable to be worse. If Kawea's drunk we'll have to get along without him. I'll be easier in my mind when we get under way."

They left without Kawea after all. The last trace of him was at Cummings; a circumstance that pointed to his not having been able to keep away from the Stewart crowd.

The moon had risen at eight o'clock, almost full. As the *Seabird* reached for the entrance to the harbor, Gideon trained his binoculars on the shore line. Suddenly he took them down from his eyes and nodded, half to himself.

"The *Penguin's* gone," he said. "Silva's boat. They've slipped out on us. Well, we couldn't have got away any earlier. That smuggling rascal is always ready fo' sea."

"Think they've got Kawea?"

"I'd place a bet that way, suh. It's a trick they're taken away from us, but it ain't the whole game. As a sailor I've always prayed and whistled and scratched the boom for wind. Now I'm doin' it fo' a calm. Give wind an' they'll beat us down. Calm an' we win."

"Wind enough now," said McCord as they gained the open sea. "Would it help any to start the engine?"

"Not in this breeze. We'll a'most hold our own on this point of sailing, suh. You'll keep her as she is, mister," Gideon said to the mate. "It's close to seven bells again, Mac."

They were calling each other Mac and Gid by this time. The zest of the chase and the quality of the prize had entered into them and cemented their comradeship. Only, as they went below, out of the keen clean air of the night, McCord's eyes seemed to dull and he looked uneasy as the *Seabird* curtseyed to wind and sea.

"Getting a bit rough, ain't it?" he asked.

"Not a bit," said Gideon heartily. "Just startin' to blow. Take a drink and forget it. You're having symptoms of sea-sickness. A julep to be taken immediately."

"I don't have symptoms," said McCord. "I just naturally turn inside out. If *this* ain't rough, I'm going to be a total loss before the trip's over. No—" he waved away the proffered glass—"I hate—hate-to-waste-a-julep;" he finished hurriedly as he bolted for the deck—and the rail.

Unfortunately for McCord, the wind continued and it began to look as if the little man's skin was to take on a permanently greenish hue. Gideon chafed at the knowledge that the *Penguin* was slowly outfooting them, hour after hour, gaining mile after mile that could only be cut down in a calm. Then they might make six knots to the *Penguin's* drifting none. But, with the breeze freshening with every sunrise, failing to fall off at sunset, both boats were fast reeling off the distance of the trip and there was no doubt but that the big advantage would lie with the first to arrive.

On the morning of the fourth day, suddenly, as if a bag had been emptied, the breeze stopped, the sea died down to a riffle, to lack of all motion. The engine was started and the *Seabird* began to walk along, to overhaul the *Penguin* which might be anywhere from seventy to a hundred miles ahead of them.

McCord revived rapidly as the motion died down. The smell of the engine did not annoy him. Two or three hours of sun, a couple of drinks, the prospect of catching up with the *Penguin*, completely rehabilitated him and he organized a shooting contest in which he proved himself best man.

Gideon was a little better with the pistol but McCord, handling a shotgun like a veteran, flattened and punctured nine out of every ten cans tossed into the air, a performance that manifestly impressed the crew.

"I used to be a great hand fo' ducks," said Gideon, "but you'd wipe my eye."

"Belong to a duck-club in the Suisun

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marshes myself," said McCord. "And I've done some clay-pigeon shooting. A shotgun's a handy weapon at close quarters, at that."

Just at sunset Gideon, who had been polishing up the glasses, focussed them and swept the sea-rim. Suddenly he stopped shifting them and looked long in one direction, before he handed them over to McCord.

"There's the *Penguin*," he said. "Well up to wind'ard, and they've got a breeze."

McCord tried long before he located the sliver of silver in the east, wondering how Gideon could tell there was wind there until he guessed that riddle himself by noticing the tell tale slant of the tiny pencil that showed against the sky.

"Beat 'em yet," said Gideon grimly. "If Kawea's aboard, he'll tell 'em all he knows about Motunui to save his own skin. They'll be careful to work up after nightfall, once they sight it. May hold 'em back. They can't have *all* the luck. They've got a few miles the best of us so far. But this wind's not going to last much after sunset. And we've got the engine. We'll keep moving all night."

The mate was in charge at midnight when they simultaneously finished the last of the ice and the mint, and turned in.

McCord awakened to a vague dream that he was sliding down-hill. He found his heels higher than his head, the line of the skylight tilted as if the schooner was mounting a great wave. It was not yet dawn and still dark in the cabin where the light had been turned out for comfort.

There came a thump, a jar, a sudden arrest of motion with the screw churning furiously. Gideon broke out of his cabin in his pajamas and McCord followed him to the slanting deck where the mate stood aghast, though he had already sent a man forward with a sounding lead.

"It's bottom, sure enough, sir," he said to Gideon. "I looked at the chart myself last night and it gives two hundred fathom an' better all round here. It must be that big quake that made the big tidal wave two months ago, sir. We ain't the first to find new reefs."

"We've found one," said Gideon ruefully. "Mac, we're in trouble. Now to get out of it."

Soundings revealed them perched like the ark on Ararat, clenched in the notch of some upthrust peak. As the sun lifted, discolorations in the water—denied them in the darkness—showed that other elevations neared the surface. They tried to tow without effect, to kedge off, to rock clear with out-swung booms. At noon the tide was falling and all they had done was to aggravate a leak.

"Sprung a strake," said Gideon. "She's here for keeps. First ship I ever lost. And the last. First monsoon squall 'll finish her. We're stuck."

"We've got boats, ain't we?" asked McCord. "You said last night we only had about a hundred and fifty miles to go."

"Mac—you're a man after my own heart. We'll take the whaleboat. Got two lugs for wind—and there's wind aft there in those clouds. When we can't get regular wind we'll use an ash breeze. Oars and good arms to pull 'em. It won't be a picnic but you're game, suh, and we'll make it."

"I've cussed out too many horses for quitting," said McCord, "to dog it myself. I'll look like an overdone waffle after the sun gets through with me but, at that, I won't feel worse than Stewart did for a while."

"We'll have a nip and a bite, first," said Gideon. "There's no hurry." He was studying the mass of cumulus clouds as he spoke. "Here comes the wind and that confounded *Penguin* with it. They're bound to have sighted us. We'll let 'em have their laugh out and go on."

"I always waited to see the numbers go up before I tore up my tickets," said McCord. "Now we've got another reason for getting the pearls. The loss of this schooner."

"Don't let that worry you, Mac. Charter price covered insurance."

The *Penguin* came up with the breeze enveloping her and heeling the *Seabird* a little on her precarious perch. There was a man in the forespreaders of the *Penguin*, a lookout, watching to avoid the danger of which the stranded schooner was efficient warning. A native in the bows threw the lead regularly. Aft, four men stood in white ducks, with glasses bent on the *Seabird*, their faces seen through binoculars, wreathed with mocking smiles though Stewart's features still showed some evidences of McCord's mauling.

The *Penguin* swept up to the limit of

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safety, less than a quarter of a mile away. Her flag dipped in derision, a faint shout came over the water. Then a flutter of signal-bunting showed as she crossed the bows of the stranded schooner and sailed about her. Gideon swore softly under his breath though he and McCord had looked on as casually as if they had been watching the start of a regatta or a favorite coming under the wire.

"Message?" asked McCord.

"Yes. 'Good by and good luck. Any messages for home?' Curse their impertinence."

"They may cross their legs in the stretch. Wonder if Kawea's with 'em?"

They waited until the *Penguin*, still carrying a good slant of wind, was hull down before they launched the whaleboat, a little low in the water after all the men and stores were in, not forgetting the guns and a case—the only one—of Canadian Club whisky. The breeze slapped into their lugs and they went briskly until the wind failed with the sun. Then the oars were manned and hour after hour the sturdy Samoans and the three natives of the crew rowed with long and steady sweep. Dawn showed them a deserted sea, unflawed with wind, beginning to fling back the tremendous heat of the sun. It played havoc with McCord's exposed flesh once more but he made light of it.

Two natives dropped out at a time, spelling the rest. The mate and Joni took their turn and the double-ended boat crept over the waste without a goal in sight, knowing that their rival for the treasure was far ahead, bound to watch for and oppose their landing.

"They may not expect us so soon," said Gideon, "but they'll take no chances. Too much at stake."

"It ain't so much the pearls," said McCord, "though I'm not denying I've been paintin' all sorts of pretty pictures of what I might do if we got 'em. You know—rose gardens and a fountain. Green lawns and a long, low house. Rum stuff for a horseman to talk about."

"Sounds intriguing, suh. Green lawns and roses an' kids pickin' the roses an' takin' 'em into the long, low house fo' mother. That ain't my ambition but I can appreciate it in another man."

"It's a —— of a long way off, ain't it," said McCord presently.

"Not far now. We made a good fifty miles last night."

"I didn't mean the island," said McCord a bit awkwardly. "I was thinking of San Francisco."

They got wind again in the afternoon, fluffing and flirting with the sea and then settling down in earnest, sending the waves racing in crisp surges over which they rode fast with swollen sails. At four in the afternoon the island of Motunui showed, a blob of blue, no larger at first than half a thumb-nail, like the hump of a far-off whale—and the streak of vapor that wisped from it might have been the monster spouting, if it had not stayed steady.

"Motuiri!" said a native and the word passed along.

"Motuiri—Smoke Island." *Tapu* to its own inhabitants by superstition.

"In the stretch," said McCord. "How far off is that?"

"About fifty miles. We're low in the water, they can't sight us. We'll keep on, if only the wind holds. Make it befo' dawn, suh. I'd like to sneak in. There's just the one front door through the reef. They'll have got in some time last night, early this mornin' maybe. Won't be lookin' fo' us so soon."

He looked at McCord approvingly. The little man sat tucked up in the stern sheets gazing at the island. His burned cheeks were drawn in, his mouth puckered and his split and swollen lower lips protruding. In his eyes was deep-seated determination.

"We'll get through, somehow," he said doggedly. "Whether they're expecting us or not."

THE stars were beginning to wink uncertainly as the whaleboat was rowed along the big waves that went swelling in to the smoking, shouting reef, looking for the entrance. Over the gleaming water, as it surged across the coral ledges, showed the dark loom of the land, a mountain peak like a vast wedge thrust in among the stars, a wisp of vapor from the crater summit, trailing west like a tress of wind-blown hair. A point where coco-palms rustled came out almost to the reef. An opening showed where a dark valley opened. Then a space of quieter water among the tumble of sea and spray and they gingerly edged into the channel in

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the false dawn, expecting every moment a cry, the blossom of fire from the shore that would tell of discovery.

But, except for the screeching of gulls, the drum-roll of the sea, there was no sound. The reef-gate was unguarded. They slid into the lagoon as the true sunrise began to gild the crater on its very summit while all the rest of the island rose a violet mass—purple shadowed, with faint flecks of green here and there, like an opal in a north light. As yet the sun was not above the sea. The spray showed ghostly gray, the waves were much the same color as the land. It was still night on the sea though the morning was coming down from the heights to greet the sun.

To the west the lagoon narrowed and was closed, save for a tiny passage between the palmy headland and the reef itself. They turned the other way, paddling gently, alert. The Samoans were like great dogs as they seemed to use their ears, their eyes and their nostrils, equally, to detect a watcher.

The lagoon ran back in a wide arm between high, sloping cliffs covered with verdure. On the shore to the right, half a mile up the reach, a fire shone redly, reflected in the water.

"That place, Kawea find pearl," said Joni in a low voice, instantly chided by Gideon. They could run no chances. The rim of light on the crater was widening—lowering, the whole air changed subtly like a glass upon which breath is fading. Trees began to stand out, rocks to take form.

At any moment they might be discovered and, so far, they could see no place for landing, nothing but thick-ranked mangroves, beachless, which might conceal a sentry who had been careless but, awaking, would start a rifle-fire from ambuscade that would wipe them out.

There was enmity between Stewart and Silva—at least—and McCord—one-sided, for McCord, having whipped his man, bore no special personal malice.

But a fortune was at stake. The still waters held possibilities of great wealth—probabilities. The samples had been shown and, once again, the garnering of gems to appear on the fair necks of innocent girls might bear vicariously a stain of blood.

A fish leaped. Another and another. The last gleamed like a bar of silver. They entered the reach, keeping close to the mangroves, slowly and cautiously approaching the fire.

As filmy veils are raised on stages lightening the dim scene, so the light cleared, filtered. In the east the horizon glowed where the mounting sun was imminent.

Then, in a little cove, they saw the *Penguin*.

And a hope that had keyed McCord and Gideon up to high pitch, set their pulses bounding, tightened their grip upon their weapons—died.

They had dreamed—finding their entrance easy—of boarding the schooner by surprize and taking possession, assuming instant mastery of the situation; a bold plan and the best one. But there were lights showing in the portholes and lights growing wan beneath the cabin skylight.

It looked as if they were wide awake aboard the *Penguin*, playing cards—making a night of it.

Suddenly a bright shaft of gold was flung across the water, straight down the reach, fair on the hull of the vessel, chasing the last of the dusk as the flaming wheel of the sun rolled up.

Gideon swung on the steering oar. At his nod the Samoans dug their oars deep but silently and pulled close in to the mangroves. He had seen the opening of a creek, barely discernible, first noticed by him because of the discoloration it made with its silt in the green water—for color was upon all the land and water now, effulgent, dazzling.

They glided in, pulling themselves along by overhanging boughs, soon hidden from the schooner where a man had come on deck yawning and calling across the reach to the camp by the fire, no longer red. They lost all sight of the inlet as the creek curved about a hill, snaking up a ravine, clearing, shallowing at last as they landed by a shelving bank and hauled the boat into a small affluent, bending down boughs and undergrowth all about it until it could not be discerned unless stumbled over.

They made up their burdens from the stores in fair division and worked through dense woods to a plateau that buttressed the hill with rock like a belt. It was hard work and they deferred their original intention of clambering over the hill until they could once more look down upon the camp and the schooner.

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The natives found bits of dry wood that burned with little smoke, diffused before it reached the tree tops. By a trickling stream of cold water gurgling out of the rock they had their breakfast. Through a gap in the woods they could see the slow vaporing of the crater, like a simmering pot on a slow fire. It had evidently died down considerably since the eruption of a few years before when Motunui had subsided and the wrath of Pere had made the place *tapu*. The cauldron stood out the color of chocolate with its seams and fissures deep purple, prominent against the sky. The smoke was thin, drifting leisurely up, caught by the wind and sent out in a straggling streamer.

After the meal they worked around the hill and looked down on the inlet and on the little cove. The camp was apparently deserted for they could see into a lean-to that had been built of palm leaves, interwoven, and the camp fire was no more than smouldering ashes. A boat trailing alongside the schooner confirmed this.

They held council of war—Gideon, McCord and the silent but efficient mate, Ericsson. They might be able simultaneously to jump the camp and the schooner, at night, after the moon had set. They had been gambling or carousing—or both—aboard the *Penguin* one night and they could not keep that up indefinitely. Gideon finally suggested that they watch the procedure of the outfit for a day and arrange their program by what they discovered.

"I hate to see 'em diving after our pearls," said McCord. "I can drop a bullet close enough anywhere on this inlet to make it interesting. I don't want to do murder in cold blood but it goes against the grain to see 'em bringing up what belongs to us makin' ready to sail off with the loot under our noses. But your judgment's sound, Gid. We'll lay off and watch. Find out if Kawea's there, anyhow. He's our best bet as a diver and we want to separate him from that crowd."

"We'll likely get back any pearls they collect," said Gideon. The planter's eyes were brightly stern and his jaw set. "Get hold of that schooner and we've got 'em where we want 'em. We can maroon 'em—as they deserve—or make 'em pay for their passages back to Suva with what pearls they've got. That's lettin' 'em off too easy. What do you say, Ericsson?"

"Leave 'em here," said the mate tersely. "That's what I'd do with 'em. That crowd ain't no more good to the world than spoiled mackerel at a weddin' breakfast."

IT WAS a full hour before any one appeared on the deck of the schooner. Then two pajama'd figures appeared—Stewart and Silva. Stewart called into the forepeak and the native crew came up. There were eight of them—all apparently Fijians. Four of them threw buckets of water over the stripped bodies of the white men.

Moore came up yawning with Whaley and the program was repeated. A Chinaman looked out of the galley. The four whites rubbed off with towels, put on their pajamas again and a native went below and came up with a tray, glasses, and a bottle of squareface.

"Bet I could smash that bottle," said McCord. I'd like to see their faces, but it's no use lettin' 'em know we're here till we're ready to tackle 'em." His face was eager. It was plain he itched to break the forced inaction.

Then bustle broke out on the *Penguin*. Four natives jumped into the trailing boat—another boat was launched. Silva and Stewart got into the stern of the first. The latter cupped his hands, calling something that they could not hear on shore, against the light wind. All they observed was pantomime, the play of marionettes, but they were vitally interested in the progress of that play.

Another man came from the forepeak in seeming reluctance, walked to the rail and finally got into the boat with Silva and Stewart. Whaley and Moore were in the other by this time. The last comer was Kawea—and a dissatisfied Kawea.

In all there appeared to be eight Fijians, Kawea, the cook left on board the schooner and the four whites. Practically even odds numerically. The boats made play over the calm and limpid reach like two water-insects, views from above.

"If they go far enough," said Gideon, "we might get down to our boat, come out and cut off the schooner. There ain't enough wind to work out well and the tide's wrong but we might do it. We could prevent 'em boarding again. Sail up closer to the diving grounds."

"That wouldn't get us Kawea," said

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Gideon, "though we can make shift to do without him. But that don't seem square, all considered. I don't believe he deliberately went with them. But they could stay ashore and raise Old Ned with our diving for awhile. I notice they've taken their rifles with 'em."

"They'd run out of ammunition after a bit——"

"No good," said Gideon. "They're over the patches and they ain't far enough away for us to make a break. There they start, gettin' their wind. Kawea's sulky, all right."

Two natives sat on the gunwale of one boat, filling their lungs up to their best capacity. Two more on the other while Kawea stood in the bows, his arms above his head, inflating and deflating his chest. He was a fine picture with his golden skin and magnificent physique and the watchers gave him due admiration. He took his time but finally fell, curving a little, sidewise, entering the water like a knife. He stayed under for a full three minutes and then reappeared, shaking his head, diving again and once more coming up to report empty-handed.

Stewart leaned forward, gesturing violently at him and Kawea turned like a porpoise, his curved body making a half-circle, shooting down again to the depths. This time he brought up some shells in the little net suspended about his neck, swam to the side of the boat and displayed them, pointing further shoreward, tossing the oysters into the boat and paddling leisurely in the direction he indicated while both the boats followed.

"Looks like he was sure tryin' to find the best for 'em," suggested Ericsson.

"Or the worst," said Gideon. "He's sore at them for something. They may have made him camp ashore with the natives—against his will. He wouldn't really mind it, of course, lives native-fashion by choice, but he's touchy over his white blood at times."

Diving commenced in earnest, two natives in each boat going down in turn to patches indicated by Kawea, who spent most of his time floating on the surface between the two boats, drifting on the almost tideless reach. The third native handled the steering oar and the white men examined each little fetch of shell as the divers brought it up.

It was tantalizing, enthralling, exasperating to McCord and Gideon, to the mate and the rest of their party; all bound for one common success against the spoilation of the lagoon. They could see the four intent on massaging the oysters, see the little spurts where the ravished shells hit the water, see the occasional excitement of a find, the passing of it back and forth, hear the faint hailing between the boats.

The divers all rested for a spell, perched on the gunwales and Kawea once more went bottom cruising. Again he porpoised, prospected with indifferent success, always working nearer the shore. From the hill they sould see his underwater movements almost as supple and sure as those of an eel.

Again Stewart gave him abrupt orders and now they could catch the angry quality of his voice. He seemed to be accusing Kawea of malingering, apparently the findings had not been up to expectations. Kawea talked back, treading water and very evidently Stewart cursed him, showing his gun that caught the flash of the sun.

This time he went down like a plummet, brought up some shell and exhibited it. Once more the natives started working from the boats and Kawea seemed to be diving with them to appease the threatening Stewart. Then Gideon nudged McCord.

"What did I tell you? They've got Kawea sulky. Look at him, he's making underwater for the shore."

The motions of the shadowy figure were plain as it stroked its way swiftly toward the land. Half-way his head came up for a quick breath, exposing only mouth and nostrils, sinking again like a fish that has come up for oxygen, turning, swimming fast for the mangroves. They watched him, fascinated with his prowess, wondering when he would be missed by those in the boats.

As it turned out they did not see him rise, did not notice him slide in between the spreading roots of the mangroves and disappear. An oyster had yielded up a gem big enough for a mutual exhibition. The two boats got close together while it was admired.

Gideon sent Joni down the hill, ordering him to keep in cover and communicate with Kawea without startling him, getting him to come up to the little camp.

"You speak along him I give one drink

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wikisi," said Gideon. "That'll fetch him."

"They've just missed him," said Ericsson. "The other divers are going down to look for him."

"What do you suppose his idea is?" asked McCord. "If he hides out they'd either sail away in time an' maroon him or, if he showed up again, they'd raise —— with him."

"He don't think that far ahead," answered Gideon. "But he's got them worried now. Spoiled their diving for the day. They think a shark's got him—or a giant squid. Those divers 'll quit cold if they think there's something down there that's grabbed the best swimmer of all of 'em. Something unseen and mysterious. They know this is a *tapu* island. Kawea's upset their program more than he ever thought of doing."

The divers had come up and inboard. They were perched in the bows of the two boats, opposing sullen inactivity to the gesticulations of the whites. Even the display of a gun failed to get them to work again. They were demoralized. Their fear of the supernatural was greater than their fear of the white man's wrath or even of the bullets from his gun. They were *pau* (through).

"They can be just as balky as any mule," chuckled Gideon. "Harder you handle 'em the more set they'll be. Tomorrow they may be able to jolly them into working again, but, by tomorrow——"

He broke off. Joni and the wide-eyed Kawea were coming through the brush.

"My word!" cried Kawea. "Plenty good you look along of me. How you get that schooner off along that reef?"

Gideon told him, in Fijian, and then Kawea broke into a torrent of his own language. Gideon boiled it down and translated it for the benefit of McCord and Ericsson.

"He says he found his girl flirting with some one else. She's inclined that way. They had a row and he went on to Suva to wait for us. Moore met him and offered to buy him a drink. In the line of liquor Kawea's got about as much resistance as any other half-white. Proud to be invited by a white, to begin with, and the native half of him clamoring for something in his stomach that'll make him feel big and fine.

"That was the beginning and end of it. They got him into Cumming's place, made him all kinds of promises, told all sorts of lies against us, of course; wound up with him dead to the world, and shipped him aboard, probably when it was raining.

"Looks as if Gideon had forgotten those figures or wasn't sure of them. He held Kawea up and made him navigate his own way but swore he'd kill him if he let on to the others. But he made the mistake of herding him for'ard, wouldn't give him a drink when he wanted it, bullied him, made fifty little mistakes that Kawea stored up.

"Then he made him camp ashore here, just as I imagined. After they'd made the island Gideon had no great use for him. Figured he could make him do the diving at the end of a gun. You saw how that worked out with the rest. Back of all they'd promised Kawea one pearl out of every five. They got quite a few yesterday. Kawea wasn't showing 'em the best patches but either they were lucky or the lagoon's just ripe. Anyhow, they didn't give Kawea any—laughed at him.

"They've all been half-soused ever since they started. Filled up when they saw us piled up on the rocks. Don't seem to have thought of our trying to make it in the whaleboat. More or less quarreling between 'emselves. Bad blood between Silva and Whaley in particular. Last night they played cards first and then shook dice for the pearls. Silva won most of 'em. Whaley lost all his, though he had been the high winner at cards. And he didn't like it. Figured Silva had rooked him, likely, but didn't have the guts or enough of a jag to come out and say so.

"Kawea saw most of this through the skylight—or heard it. By this morning he was ready to strike. And he did it the easiest way. He's tickled to death over the way he's got them upset. They're going back to the schooner now. Probably send the men ashore. Sleep this afternoon. We'd better wait till after that moon gets down though. Their cook may be alert and there's a young chap acting as cabin-steward, Kawea says. If they caught us coming off they'd shoot us out of the water. The cabin's an armory according to Kawea, and they've got rifles and small-arms on deck.

"I'm not worryin' about the chances in a square fight, Mac," he went on, "but I don't see the advantage of givin' them an even show to plug either one of us when

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they've stolen the pearls—or tried to. No sense in us risking gettin' shot up. What we want to do is to turn the tables. And come out on top with the winner takes all. The pearls ain't goin' to do me any good if you've got a bullet through your head and I don't believe Bill's widow 'ud think much of 'em under those conditions."

McCord agreed, somewhat grudgingly. He knew the value of Gideon's strategy but he pined for action. Kawea, primed with whisky, gave glowing account of the pearls already brought up, discounting them with the assertion of far richer patches that he knew. It began to look more like hundreds rather than tens of thousands of dollars that were lying there on the floor of the placid reach, concentrated in the nacreous growths of disturbed shell-fish, gems that would ultimately find their way from this savage island to the shops on Fifth Avenue, Regent Street, the Rue de la Paix, exhibited in gleaming beauty for the adornment of skins that would strive in vain to match their milky purity, priced at figures that would seem fabulous to Kawea, figures far beyond those to be gained by sellers in the wholesale marts before the pearls were selected and matched.

McCord was not covetous but he indulged in a few day dreams. He had a vision of owning certain horses that he had an eye on, breeding on a foot-hill ranch he knew of in California where a valley offered a chance for a training track and where the climate meant that his beauties could be conditioned the year round. He saw himself leaning over a rail clocking the time of his own two year olds.

There was a stream in this valley, coming down from the mountains. It flowed through alfalfa patches green as emerald, through grain fields, it swept about a curving plateau that put out from the hills. There a lawn was green, bordered with fruit orchards — lemon — orange — peach —almond — apricot — there palms grew and tall eucalyptus waved in the breeze. There was a low-set bungalow with a patio where roses fought amicably with wisteria, a fountain, flowers—flowers everywhere and a woman picking them.

McCord had dreamed this dream before. There were realities to base it; the valley existed—so did the woman. And now—for the first time—the vision seemed less nebulous as he sat on the hill-side in the wild bush, for the first time. Good luck seemed running true to form and carrying all his money.

His eyes, that had softened, hardened again as he looked down at the schooner. Unconsciously his hand reached out and gripped hard on the butt of his rifle. Gideon, observing him through half-closed eyes as he attempted a siesta, chuckled inwardly. McCord was not very hard to read. As for pearls, Gideon was keen enough to get them, far more keen for the adventure of the attempt. It made a younger man of him, it restored to him a measure of self-respect that he had found lacking during the last, easier years. He was wealthy far beyond his needs, and growing wealthier. Money meant nothing to him but action did—and the call of friendship.

The crew came ashore after a while and stayed there. Stewart and the rest had chairs brought up on deck and placed beneath an awning where the breeze cooled them. They seemed to sleep, but occasionally a steward brought them fresh supplies for their glasses. On the hill, in turn, the outfit dozed through the heat of the afternoon. The wind rustled pleasantly in the trees and stretched to leeward the smoke as it rose from the protecting lips of the crater, making it look like a plume in the conical cap of a giant.

About an hour before sunset the earth trembled under them in a passing tremor and they sat up, none much disturbed but McCord. Gideon laughed at him.

"And you from California," he said. "Here you are on an island with a live volcano, sitting on the edge of a great pot full of steam, and not expecting even a shiver. It's when those shivers stop you want to look out. If the lid gets too tight there's a blow-out at the weakest point."

"It ain't worryin' me that way," said McCord. "Sort of makes me homesick. Somebody's poked the fire. She's smokin' up good. That's all I was botherin' about. If that pillar of cloud ain't smokin' some fine mornin' we're goin' to have a couple of hundred cannibals on our backs, ain't we? Look at that ring, will you. Couldn't have done better myself with a cigar."

The tremor seemed to have stirred up the subterranean fire. The smoke had decidedly increased in quantity and one great ring had shot up, turning to an oval

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as the wind caught it, sailing away unbroken. The puffs came intermittently and in steadily augmenting volume.

"Turned over the grate," said McCord.

Gideon nodded.

"Spasmodic," he said. "They always are. Temperamental. All the natives say a woman lives in 'em. *Pere.* The Fire Goddess. An uncertain sort of lady."

"Just so long as she don't go to sleep on the job," suggested McCord. "Gid, I hate to remind you but it must be close to seven bells."

"Good man. This spring water's good and cold. It's too bad mint ain't native to the climate. I had my planting sprigs brought down by a steamer steward. He thought I wanted it for mint sauce."

Night fell swiftly with the lighting of a fire in the camp below, the illumination of the schooner. The wind dropped to nothing. Across the reach and up to the hillside came the faint notes of a phonograph, incongruous in its setting and the selection of the air.

It was the sextette from "Lucia."

"I suppose even a skunk like Silva can be musical," said Gideon. "Ah, that's more like that crowd."

The changed record gave off the tiny blares and jangles of a jazz-time tune.

They planned the details of their raid. The moon would set at three o'clock, or about two hours before sunrise. By that time they planned to have the whaleboat in the mouth of the inlet beneath the mangroves. With McCord and Gideon were to go four of the crew. The rest, under Ericsson, with Kawea as a special emissary, were to work down to the camp. It was decided not to attempt a simultaneous attack, partly because of the difficulty of timing the cautious approach of the boat to the schooner against a flood-tide, partly to obviate any inopportune warning from the shore.

Kawea—who entered into the scheme—could walk into the camp and be sure of a welcome. It should then be simple enough to surround the half sleepy but all-curious natives while they crowded about Kawea.

But Ericsson was not to move until they signaled from the schooner that they had taken possession of her. Something might interfere, the attempt might have to be put off until another time. The schooner was the important and vital objective. If they had to withdraw there was no sense in giving away the advantage they held in their presence on the island being unknown, by the capture of the secondary consideration, the camp. They could hardly hope to accomplish that without some noise.

At the appointed hour the whaleboat, taken out of its cover of brush, nosed out into the reach and headed up for the *Penguin*. Late though it was, the schooner was lighted up aft and there was a lantern burning somewhere on the deck forward, its light diffused. A lamp showed in the galley-house.

"Slept enough this afternoon for another session tonight," suggested McCord.

"Likely enough," agreed Gideon. "I don't like that light for'ard nor the one in the galley. We'll go aboard over the taffrail. Two of the boys can take care of the cook and the steward if we can get the drop on the cabin crowd. We'll see."

In Samoan he cautioned the rowers about their oars. As the blades dipped and were pulled through they disturbed the tiny illuminating-insects and blue flame showed like the light in a turned jewel. Drops like burning alcohol fell from the uplifted blades. They were forced to stem the last of the ebb that was still stealing around the shallower shores of the reach and eddying in the cove where the schooner lay anchored. A fire was again going at the camp, the indispensable night-fire of the savage. Its glare did not reach beyond the land side of the schooner and the whaleboat approached from the other direction—rowed ahead and suffered to slip down with a paddle touch now and then.

The partners on the *Penguin* were plainly awake and jubilant over liquor. Snatches of song sounded in one man's baritone that they fancied Whaley's.

Fathom by fathom and foot by foot they came closer, getting ready to grasp the rail. The companion-doors were open and light flowed out of it into the empty cock-pit. Gideon and McCord planned to make the head of these stairs and cover the four of them.

With the advantage of surprize it all seemed possible enough.

SUDDENLY a snarl of quarrel broke out. The singer had broken off abruptly to cry out.

"—— you, Silva, those dice are cocked."

There was an answering oath, the crack

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of a gun, the splintering of skylight glass where a bullet had gone wild, a yell that stopped before it was fairly started. Then Stewart's English voice, unmistakeable, drawling—

"You've done for him, Silva!"

"What of it? He called me a cheat and drew a gun on me. Serves him right. What are you staring at Moore? Gives you a third of his share, don't it?"

Then Moore:

"Let's get out of this. Look at him. He's all bloody. Close his eyes."

"You don't have to be afraid of him," jeered Silva. "You didn't do it."

There was the clink of nervous bottle against a glass in an unsteady hand—the sounds plain in the still night.

The three men came out of the cabin. Gideon drew the whaleboat under the counter. The swift, cold-blooded murder momentarily appalled them, halted their plans. The element of surprize was gone. The instinct to avenge the dead Whaley, thief and conspirator against them though he was, rose in the two men. But the shot might well have alarmed the camp. They were in a hazardous position if they should be discovered now. It would be easy enough to shoot them down in the boat, all the odds on the side of the marksmen on deck.

"We've got to get rid of him," said Moore. "He can't lie there. The knife sliced his jugular. It's still spurting. All over the floor. ——!"

"Don't be a fool," said Silva harshly. "I'll signal them. They can come off and bury him if you're so squeamish. Or let the land-crabs finish the job."

There was a shuffling of feet. Moore came to the rail, suddenly sick, but he staggered back at sight of the boat, seeing the upturned faces of two white men staring up at him. His cry brought Stewart as they thrust off with a shove on an oar. A lantern was being hauled up and down on a whip by the main-halyards. It was the same signal they had agreed upon to give Ericsson if they got possession of the schooner. It would send him down to the camp, Kawea ahead. But already dark figures were moving by the fire, a boat being pushed off.

"Fat's in the fire," said Gideon. "Lay into it, boys."

The Samoans put their backs into their great strokes and the boat went leaping away from the schooner. A bullet whined over them, *thupping* into the water. Another and then a swift volley. Stewart and Silva were firing.

Gideon and McCord returned the fire and the range rapidly increased beyond efficiency. They heard Silva calling for a rifle.

A Winchester bullet came smashing through the gunwale, splintering it, going on through the floor. Under the starlight they were a swiftly moving blot marked by the streaks of liquid flame from the oars and their wake.

They had brought only the pistols and they were soon powerless to return the fire. Both Stewart and Silva had rifles now. Then Moore joined in. Spurts of pale flame were whipped from the water. Now and then a bullet struck the flying boat but nó one was hit. They were too dim a mark for men with rifles unused to moving targets. Little flicks of flame now showed at the camp site. Ericsson had joined in.

The Samoans pulled with little grunts at the end of each heaving stroke, their teeth showing between their parted lips, the whites of their eyes displayed vaguely. The boat from the camp was now alongside the schooner. The fire ceased. Then it came again over the water. Stewart and Silva were going to make a chase of it.

There was little to fear on that score. But they had failed. Now the men on the *Penguin* knew that they had made the island. With tomorrow open warfare would begin. From now on Moore did not count for much. He was plainly a minor villain. It was probable that Stewart stood in with Silva on the cheating dice.

They hugged the shore, making it at a tangent that brought them close to the inlet. Gideon's expert eyes had marked the entrance with certain signs that were indistinguishable to McCord. The latter was furious at their failure though it had been through no fault of theirs, furious at their retreat, though it was the only sane thing to do under the circumstances.

The rowers shipped their oars, grasping at the mangroves. They too knew where to turn in, though in the darkness it was impossible to find except by those somewhat familiar with the approach. They were well up the creek before the other boat swept by. They made landing and again

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covered up the boat. The sky was graying. The creek might be discovered, an attack might be made that way, though the *Penguin* boat might go on down the lagoon and find other places where they could have worked into the mangroves.

A hail sounded and Ericsson and Kawea came through the woods. The mate had heard the shot and been puzzled by its being the only one, waiting for the signal. The boat had got well away from the shore camp before they reached it and they had watched the fight, knowing from Kawea that the natives in the boat were unarmed, the mate unwilling to open fire on unarmed men though he had started shooting when it left the schooner in pursuit.

They held a hasty consultation. Their position on the hill was a good one. They could watch the schooner and defend against an attack if they did not launch a counter one. Meantime breakfast was in order.

The boat was returning, close to the schooner when they saw it. It was left alongside while the natives climbed over the rail after the three white men. They could see Silva sweeping the shore with binoculars. Smoke came from the galley stove. There was evident excitement aboard. Then two men brought up the body of Whaley, bundled or sewn up in canvas, weighted with something, for it plunged heavily to the bottom.

The anchor was hauled up, jibs and main set and the schooner sailed out farther into the lagoon, dropping its hook again at a safer distance.

Ericsson, whose cold blood had been worked up into a fury by the news of the murder and the fighting proposed shooting while the *Penguin* shifted position.

"They ain't out of range yet," he said.

But Gideon interposed with a look at McCord for confirmation:

"We'll give our position away, for one thing," he said. "And, I don't know whether it's my conscience, but I hate pot-shotting."

McCord nodded approval.

"They're a pack of bloody rascals," he said. "In our place they wouldn't hesitate. But I guess you're right, Gid. It don't seem sporting."

They had been too occupied with the maneuvres on the *Penguin*, munching their food meanwhile, to notice anything else until Kawea suddenly called to them, pointing with his arm beyond the reach and the opposing shore to the channel lying between the two islands.

"Look," he cried. "Look along Motulele. Too many canoe come."

They saw specks on the water, moving in a flotilla. The glasses revealed half a dozen high-stemmed canoes, outriggered, crowded with men, the flash of the paddles that aided the matting sails flashing in the sun. Already they were half-way across the strait, coming with tremendous speed.

With one accord they turned toward the crater. There was not a sign of vapor. The jagged lips of the caldron showed distinct against the sky. The convulsion of the previous afternoon had been the last throe of the dying volcano. *Pere* had gone to sleep. Motunui was no longer *tapu*. The islanders were returning to their home.

"There's nigh two hundred of them," said Gideon.

"Think they're armed?" asked McCord.

"Does a duck have feathers? They never travel without all they've got in the way of weapons, any more than Stewart did without his monocle. They'll give us a merry time unless we get out. Barely time for that," he said. "Tide's making to flood. There's wind enough. We can't make it in the boat. They'll be off the reef-gate inside of half an hour, before we got it in the creek."

"Mebbe they no savvy we're here," said Kawea. "They find schooner all right. Maybe they have bad fight. Mebbe plenty get *mate* (dead). Then they think *tembe-tembe* still too strong along this place. I think they kill plenty on that schooner. That good for us."

"We've got to warn 'em," said McCord. "They're white men. Look at those canoes come. It'll be a massacre."

"Give me your *pareu*," Gideon said to one of the Samoans. "I'll wig-wag 'em. Silva can read what I send."

"If they don't shoot you when you show," said Ericsson.

"I'll chance that. It's a long shot from where they moved to. You fire a couple of shots in the air Mac, to get their attention."

He tore the loin-cloth in halves and made two flags as he spoke.

"I'll tell 'em to send a boat for us," he went on. "We'll fight with 'em. There's goin' to be blood on the water, suh, befo' that schooner clears. We're stuck. They'd

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get us in the open boat. Got a fighting chance on board."

THOMAS McCORD fired in the air Gideon commenced sending. McCord stepped out beside him in plain view on the little point of rock that was clear of trees. He expected a shot or two and he did not intend to let Gideon take all the chances. He was not sure what would happen after the fight was over, if they won, but he was sure that they must all stick together.

And none came. Some one aboard had seen the smokeless crater. Kawea had talked about the *tapu* when he was still partly drunk and believed that Stewart would keep his promises. Then they watched the signaling.

Canoes coming. Fast. Close up. Send Boat. Will help fight.

Gideon repeated his message, over and over. The canoes came on rapidly.

Orders were issued on the *Penguin*. The decks were in a bustle. The anchor came up, then the sails were hoisted. Silva they could see rapidly bending bunting on a signal-halyard. Then the schooner began to move through the water. The boat had been davited and there were no signs of it being lowered.

The flags were hoisted, fluttered out. Gideon's eyes blazed.

"The dirty skunks," he said. "The treacherous curs!"

"What does it say?" asked McCord.

"What you might expect, suh. The code signal for *'Thanks and Good-by.'"* We can't help 'em now. They've got troubles of their own. The canoes 'll beat 'em to the entrance. Let's go to the headland!"

With their weapons they hurried through the woods on a swift traverse of the hill, breaking out into scanty timber overlooking the lagoon and the barrier reef.

The canoes had lowered their sails and were skirting the breakers, traveling fast. The schooner, heeling a little, bucking the flood that would give them water enough to get through the reef, was half-way across the lagoon. Suddenly the canoemen saw the canvas above the spouting waves.

Scores of gleaming paddles were thrust upward into the air then plunged with redoubled energy into the sea. The homecoming was turned in an instant into a raid, the warriors charged with blood lust.

A whisper of their savage yelling came up to the headland, grimly menacing for all its reduction.

The *Penguin* headed up for the entrance as the first two canoes turned in and came rushing on the current that held back the schooner, struggling against it, wind against tide. There were men fitting stanchions into the rail, stringing wire between them, the gleam of weapons, the three white men in the bows, firing. The bark of the rifles came like the whipping of carpets far away.

The canoes ranged alongside, others following them. Dark figures swarmed up over her sides, caught in the wires. Spears flew.

Then there came a pale burst of flame, the dull roar of a detonation. The schooner rocked, yawed, the forepart of a canoe flew into the air in fragments, water geysering, shrill howls sounding like the mews of gulls.

"Dynamite," said Gideon. "God, they've struck!"

The explosion of short stick after stick flung desperately to check the crowding rush, with the canoes now blocked in a solid mass over which the savage horde leaped and rushed regardless of the havoc among them, had flung the schooner off her course. A lifting swell caught her, dropped her on the coral where she swung sidewise to the channel.

The water was dotted with heads of swimming men, marked with bodies that floated, that moved feebly. But the odds were too great. Reckless of wire, of bullets, of the dynamite exploding in the mass of their headlong rush, the cannibals boarded the schooner, spreading fore and aft, hacking and stabbing in hand to hand combat.

They saw Silva fall with a spear through his belly. Stewart and Moore were each the core of a swirling mob. Then Moore went down.

Stewart broke clear, one arm hanging helpless, retreating, free for an instant, stumbling over a sheet, falling back into a jib with a savage leaping for him. Stewart clubbed him with his pistol which he flung into the face of the next comer, then stooped to snatch up something from the deck.

Through the strong glasses they could get every detail they concentrated upon and McCord saw the stub of a cigar still in the

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corner of Stewart's mouth. It seemed bizarre until he realized the use he had made of it—was yet to make of it. The man was fighting berserk and for a moment the savages gave the white devil-devil breathing space. It was all he wanted. He snatched a half-stick of dynamite from a little pile assembled there in the bows for use as they went through the channel and met the first of the cannibal fleet.

A puff of smoke as he drew on the cigar then touched its glowing end to the frayed out fuse.

It sputtered as a knot of men came charging, interlocked, half a dozen striving to club a desperately fighting Fijian. They crashed into Stewart—again he tripped over a sheet and fell as the stick went off, igniting the compounded explosive of the spare sticks.

The roar came surging up to the hill. The stress waved before the concussion, the bows of the schooner disappeared in a cloud of white vapor, the foremast shooting rocket-wise, fragments of scorched bodies belched into the air, falling back into the sea, on the reef, the remnants of the *Penguin* wrenched apart, torn asunder by the eager flood, sinking in mid-channel, the mainmast, shredded with canvas, pointing at an angle from the lash of the tide.

The canoes seemed wrecked, jumbled in broken confusion, one flung amid the breakers while a confusion of cries arose and naked men struck out for the calmer waters of the lagoon, several of them clinging to the one canoe that was swamped, still partly seaworthy. Arms were flung as maimed men went down while the flood sucked about the schooner and the sharks came racing for their unexpected feast.

There were none left of the *Penguin*. Of the savages hardly fifty survivors and many of them badly hurt. Their wizards had misled them. The white men were dead but the *tembe-tembe* of *Pere* was still strong. There were no trophies to take back or to bear ashore, no white flesh for the ovens, no darker skinned captives to sate their hunger. They hauled in a few, they clubbed others of their fellows and made for the beach.

"They'll try to land at the camp," said Gideon. "They may make for the creek but I doubt it. Come on, we'll keep along the edge and see where they go."

The faces of the three—McCord, Gideon and Ericsson—were white, fixed masks of fury. Their personal enemies had been destroyed but they had gone down fighting. Stewart had been almost a hero at the end. Aside from driving off the Motunui men they were determined to teach them a bitter lesson. The racial hatred burned strong.

They raced along, watching the canoe that passed the creek, plainly making for the camp beach. Hurrying at their best through the woods and the dense clumps of undergrowth, the canoe had grounded before they came tearing down the hill to the shore and let fly a volley. Four or five men went down, the rest, led by a warrior with a pearl disk marking him a chief as it swung on his chest, whooped as they rushed the whites, thirty maddened savages swinging great clubs and hurling spears, leaping and dodging, sidewise and high in the air, howling like devils from the pit.

One more volley and the rifles were good only as clubs. McCord and Gideon had their shotguns besides automatics, Ericsson a long barreled Colt. There was scant time before the frenzied savages were on them at hand-grips. McCord fired both barrels fair at the disk of pearl, dazzling in the sun. It disappeared and he had a brief sight of a chest that was little better than a bloody cavity as the chief toppled on him, covering him with gore, bearing him down with his dying weight, his hissing breath sounding in wheezes, his eyes glaring into McCord's.

There was the scuff of sand, the gasps and howls of men, the dull thud of tremendous blows. Now the mad mêlée sloshed calf deep, now they were on the sand, striving for breath, warding off descending weapons, clutching with wrists that tore loose, grasping writhing bodies in primitive combat as the last cartridges were fired from the automatics.

A big Samoan fought beside McCord for a while, exchanging his broken rifle for a club torn from an adversary, swinging the ironwood mace as if it was a light stick, shouting deep chested challenges, blood streaming from a gash in his shoulder, another on his chest.

McCord's left arm was numb from a blow that he had not felt delivered. Somehow his shotgun had gone—he remembered the butt breaking at the grip. He still had his empty automatic and he used it with his boxer's skill. A brawny savage seized

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him, whirled him from the ground. The man was without weapons and sought to trip him, striving at the same time to use his teeth. Him McCord struck over the eyes with the muzzle of his gun and the steel sight tore away a flap of flesh that hung down over the other's eyes. A second smash broke the man's jaw and his arms, from steel bands, seemed turned to limp and loosening ropes.

He caught sight of Gideon, bringing up the butt of his shotgun under an opponent's chin. Kawea sprang by him, a long knife flashing, coming down, sunk to the hilt in a man's belly, ripping it open. He heard Ericsson shouting, "Yah! Yah! Yah!" Some one clutched his knees and he was down in the water, gulping the salty stuff, struggling with an antagonist, rolling in the shallows, half drowned. That one vanished, melted—it seemed—and he got to his feet, wiping blood, his own or his enemies', out of his eyes. Vaguely he remembered that he had throttled the man. His hands were empty and he looked, still choking with the brine, his eyes a little dim, for a weapon.

Two Samoans, giants beside the Motunui men, Joni with them—a Joni gone amok, lunging with a spear—drove three men before them. The canoe had been pushed into deep water, it was manned by perhaps a score, some of whom were those injured in the schooner fight and who had never left it. Others were wading and swimming out toward it, still others lay dead and dying in the swash and on the sand.

The fight was over. Not a man engaged in it had gone unscathed, unbloodied. Gideon stood leaning on a spear, puffing hard, his white drill sopping with sea-water and stained with blood. Joni sat nursing a wound in his leg. One Samoan lay with a crushed skull, two more were leaning against each other. Ericsson nursed a broken wrist and his shoulder was red with his own blood. Blood was running down McCord's face, his hair was matted with it.

The firearms had done the real work. There were eleven Motunui men who had gone into the uttermost darkness of their spirit world, five more gasping out the last of their breath with the dregs of their blood. These had gone down in hand to hand encounter. McCord, as he waded slowly ashore, saw the man he had sliced with his pistol rolling in the swash, stunned first, drowned afterward. The fury of the combat was still on him and he looked about him in the hot triumph of a well-won fight, conscious of a broken arm and rather proud of it as the canoe drew off, making for the lagoon, the reef, the channel and Motulele.

"Eyah, Makkordi!" shouted Kawea. "That one fine fight, you savvy? Too much blood you lose. How many you kill. Me, I kill three."

McCord's head seemed to be expanding and contracting and the land swelled strangely out of focus. He heard Gideon's anxious voice asking him if he was much hurt, his own, answering:

"Who? Me? Not a bit. Li'l scratch. All I need's a drink."

Then the shore falling away from under him—space—darkness.

A WEEK later the whaleboat floated in mid-reach. Over the stern of it an awning of plaited palm-leaves had been skilfully devised, grateful provision against the sun. Under this protection McCord sprawled luxuriously, smoking, enjoying himself despite the fact that his left arm was still too stiff for service and that his head was done up in a bandage of cloth over green leaves that looked like a ridiculous attempt at adornment, but was purely medicinal, prescribed and found by one of the Samoans as a sure panacea for scalp wounds and broken heads. They had fulfilled their promise.

Gideon was ashore, fast in a siesta. The planter had some slight lacerations, a torn muscle and many bruises. He was getting in shape again, with the rest of them. Ericsson's wrist had been set and he was fast rounding into fitness.

The weather was exquisite, balmy with fragrance from the flowers and scented ferns of the bush, with a wind that tempered the sun and made its warmth healing as it seemed to penetrate their bodies. The sky was cloudless, the only stain upon it one at which McCord looked with ineffable content, the black smoke rolling from the top of the crater.

It rose in thick puffs of vapor, cauliflowering upward, then borne streaming on the wind—not a pillar but a banner, a flag of *tapu* under which they raided the treasure house of the lagoon at their ease though they wasted no time.

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It was certain that the tribesmen would have made another descent upon Motunui if the crater had continued smokeless. There would have been a time of mourning and of propitiatory rites, followed by nights of drums and dancing, of exhorting wizards, the taunting wailing of widows, the knowledge seeping in that they had killed the white men on the schooner and that these others left on the land had no big boat, possessed no dynamite, though they had fought mightily.

Then more canoes would come. Kawea said that the tribe numbered more than a thousand men. The six canoes had been merely the advance guard.

The wizards would point out to them that it was not *Pere* who had bested them but white men. That these same white men had landed without harm. There would be talk of feasting on white flesh, demand for victims to appease the relatives of those who had died, particularly the families of chiefs. They would eventually come swarming in numbers impossible to hold back, breaking up into a dozen war parties hunting through the bush.

Gideon, McCord and Ericsson had discussed these matters the morning after the fight and the outlook was not pleasant. They had come out of one skirmish triumphant but they could not hope to fight off a tribe.

"I used to say I didn't care what any one did with my body after I was dead," said McCord. "But then I didn't know I was goin' to land on a cannibal island. I'll admit I've got a strong dislike about furnishin' steaks and chops for Motunui."

It was no wonder that he gazed so complacently at the smoke that had reappeared, its black weft far more efficient than any white flag of truce. No canoe would dare to cross the channel for a landing so long as that visible symbol of Pere's wrath showed that her *tembe-tembe* was still strong.

Kawea's head appeared out of the water, popping up like a seal's. His teeth showed flashing in the sun, his frizzy hair was plastered over his skull, his eyes were shining as he thrust up his net.

"Plenty good shell I find," he said. "This time plenty fine pearl, I bet you. This one fine lagoon."

Ericsson, in the bows, his arm in a sling but otherwise in full capacity as an executive, gave order to the rowers, who paddled to where Kawea led. The two Samoan divers sat on the gunwale, slipped in feet first, turning over and gliding down to ten fathoms, using their limbs like fins with slight but efficient motion. With one hand clutching at ledge or mass of shell, they detached the sick oysters, filled their neck-nets and came up again.

The shells were kept to be opened in the afternoon after the divers had done their daily stint. It was a lottery presided over by Gideon and McCord, a lottery with many blanks but many prizes, thanks to the expert Kawea, bottom-cruising, locating the likeliest looking shell, saving time and labor, a lottery of never failing fascination.

Day by day the shining, shimmering heap of fine gems grew. There were seeds, baroques, asymmetrical gems in plenty. But the daily "fetch" of real pearls was never less than eight and ranged as high as twenty. Most were silver-whites, slightly radiant with faint dawn colors. Some were rose, some gray and there was one fawn-colored, pear-shaped pearl that was going to make history.

Day by day the smoke rose in never failing volume from the peak. There was always a look-out on the hill but the channel remained vacant.

The vision of the valley ranch set among the California hills, the woman picking flowers, the two-year-olds streaking round the track grew ever clearer to McCord. Already Gideon estimated their pearls at a hundred thousand dollars in the Tahiti market—with the fawn colored beauty set aside for special sale, likely to bring ten thousand by itself.

Five thousand was to be set aside as a trust fund for Kawea, to be administered by Gideon. Two thousand more for wages, stores and rewards to the divers.

"We've skimmed the cream of the lagoon," said Gideon, "except for some fine patches Kawea claims he has in reserve. There's a fortune left. But the rains will be coming soon and I suppose you'll be wantin' to get back, suh."

"I do," assented McCord. "And I've got plenty for Annie. Fifty thousand net. Twenty-five thousand more for her and you and me. I vote we stay another week.

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I'd like to give Ericsson a stake. And I'll own up I'm not crazy about that open-boat voyage back to Suva. It's got to be made. But I'll confess that I'm no sailor, Gid. Also we're down to the last bottle of whisky. It'll be a dry trip, that way. I hope it will be the other."

"Here's hoping," said Gideon with a grin that McCord could not fathom as the planter reached for the corkscrew. "But let's make it ten days. I've a special reason."

Fortune gave to them lavishly. There was a share for Ericsson, the rewards were doubled and the valuation, kept conservative by Gideon, added another ten thousand to be split three ways.

Kawea checked off the tally of the days before they started on a stick. He was exuberantly sure of his triumphant return to Suva and Nevdane. Had he not killed three men? And Joni only one?

It was in the middle of the night following the ninth day that McCord heard Gideon moving about but thought little of it. But the planter was still missing when McCord awakened again at dawn. Anxious, he went in search of him, calling his name, trying to convince himself nothing was wrong.

At last he heard the planter calling from the headland where they had watched the fight. Gideon came to meet him through the trees, halting him.

"Mac," he said, "how about a mint julep?"

McCord stared at him wide eyed.

"When I was young," said Gideon, "I used to consider my own resources sufficient. With the loss of youth, I acquired a little wisdom and a desire to provide against accidents.

"We had one coming over. I told you I had a canny Scotch superintendent at Lamburi. I chartered that power-launch we couldn't get when we started and I told Menzies to come down after us in thirty days. We were up against a doubtful proposition and anyway we'd want more mint.

"Come out of the trees and I'll show her to you. She came in just before dawn according to instructions. I signaled her when I first saw her lights. Been looking for her all night.

"There she is. If Menzies has forgotten the mint I'll fire him."

Menzies had not forgotten. He even had ice stowed away in sawdust for which thoughtfulness Gideon made him a julep and gave him a pearl for a stick-pin. The Scotchman's eyes widened as he saw the trove of gems.

"Mac," said Gideon, "here's to happy endings, suh. I've a notion Bill Edwards' widow won't be a widow long. Here's hopin' not, suh. Hopin' she gets the right man and so here's to you, Mac, God bless you. Both of you."

McCord flushed and solemnly tilted his tumbler in a "bottoms up."

"That's to you, Gid," he said. "I sure hate to part with you."

"Bring her over to Lamburi for the honeymoon."

"That's good of you, Gid. If I pull it off, I'll do it on dry land. I've no notion to be seasick on that occasion."

"I'm sending her enough pearls out of my share for a necklace, Mac. You'll not deny me that. I'm goin' to use the rest of it for a trip. Confound it suh, if you won't come to me, hanged if I don't go to you and drop in on Lem Watts at San Diego."

Menzies broke in. There they were almost twenty miles on the way and the land was diminishing with every turn of the screw. But the superintendent's voice was excited.

"Didna' ye tell me t'was the smoke kep' ye safe?" he demanded. "No that they could overtak' us noo, but I'm thinkin' it was nigh a meeracle the way it's turned oot. Yon crater's gangin' oot. I've been watchin' the reek fra it an' it's lessening fast."

Gideon laughed.

"Tell him, Mac," he said. "It was your idea."

"There's lots of green and gummy wood on the island," said McCord. "It wasn't much of a job to chop enough and haul it up to the peak for a smudge-fire in the crater. Worked like a charm. We chucked on the last of the wood this morning before we left."

The superintendent gazed at him with a look almost reverent.

"They tell me yo're a bonny fechter," he said. "But a treek like that takes brains. Mon, ye've a great heid on ye."

"Joni," called Gideon. "More ice and mint."

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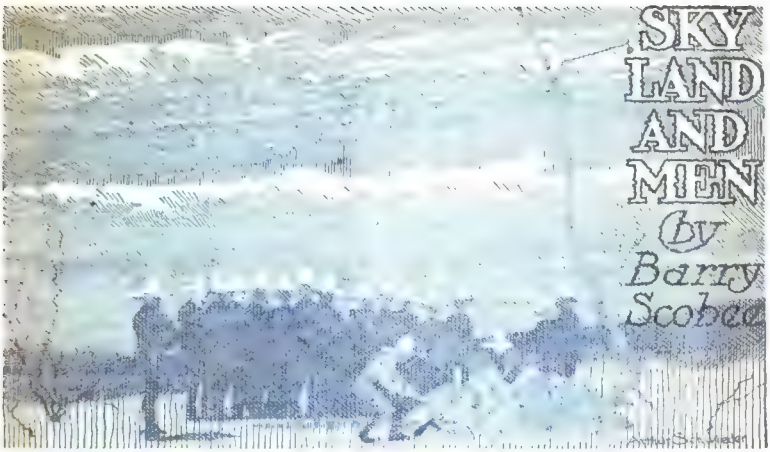

Author of "The One Man Feud," "Empty Country," etc.

THE cattle country disliked Sweezy. For Sweezy was getting a ranch worth a hundred thousand dollars, and thirty thousand dollars worth of cattle, and forty thousand in Liberty Bonds, for nothing.

The cattlemen called him behind his back, "Sweezy the Rat," because he was from the toughest district of New York City and they imagined the name was appropriate. It expressed their contempt for him.

Sweezy bent an inch and looked between the heavy bars of the corral gate. His glance moved along a straight gray path to the shady old house under the pine trees, then went to right and left, and he smiled.

To one side of the path a group of big-hatted ranchmen, whose holdings would have totaled a million acres, perched around the rim of a wagon-box flat on the ground, talking, and whittling so that the little chips and shavings fell into the box.

A similar group farther along stood around an automobile, tapping and talking about a cracked wind-shield. And a little knot of women sat under the trees near the house, their chairs drawn together.

These people of the big ranch country had come to attend the funeral of ancient Hiram Sheppard—"King" Hiram, they had called him.

Sweezy with his mystic smile took in the men one by one. In his two years here they had treated him with short courtesy. Even this forenoon they had not been open-handed with their greetings. The smile, a sort of radiance over the wizened face, deepened.

He lifted the heavy iron hook of the gate and passed through, and latching it behind him started along the path hard-beaten by the high heels of cow-land boots.

Sweezy half expected some of the high-hatted men to speak to him. He hoped they would call to him, draw him into a group as neighbor to neighbor, as a fellow ranchmen, new owner of the finest ranch in northern New Mexico.

However the cattlemen, almost imperceptibly, gave him their backs and became very busy talking or listening to the talk—until his boots sounding hollowly on the path told them he was past. Then they looked after him in open hostility.

"Jiggers!" exclaimed one on the wagon-box. "To think a warble like that has come into one of the best ranches in the state!"

"A fortune for nothing," said another. "Hundr'd sections even, sixty-four thousand acres, well watered, not over stocked, fine grass, a little timber."

"And Liberty Bonds."

"And he never worked a full hard day in his life."

"Or branded a maverick."

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They laughed a little at this last, and some one added—

"Sweezy the Rat."

As the little figure of the newly-rich ranchman progressed along the path, and the men did not extend even common courtesy, the pleasant look on Sweezy's countenance clouded and he looked more shrunken than was his wont. A mist of perspiration appeared around his eyes. But after all, he told himself, it did not matter, for he would come out the winner.

He passed the women and, coming to the house, went through the open door of the seldom used living-room. Old Hiram Sheppard lay within, waiting to cross the threshold one more time. Could he have had his stubborn way he would no doubt have been in the kitchen, his customary refuge.

Sweezy sat down in the disreputable old easy-chair, a feeling of tenderness and respect filling him. "Mister," as he had always called Hiram in what had been described as his know-nothing way, was better company than those outside.

From where Sweezy sat he could not see the women beside the path but their voices carried in to him, or one voice did, a staccato pecking like a flicker on a resonant oak-tree, with the words "tramp," and "stranger," and "shriveled up ignoramus," reaching his ears. Sweezy knew that she was talking about him.

Tramp—stranger—the epithets recalled many things to Sweezy the Rat, things of the last four years, and the last four days, and today——

SWEEZY, missing Sing Sing merely by an indifferent jury, spent the first week after the court warned him and dismissed him, at thinking—hard thinking.

He'd never been able to make the grade in thievery and stick-ups like his pals, though he had the same advantages of birth and rearing. He had been born of a slick father and a sly mother in a lousy tenement, and had fought for snipes and crusts in the street from the day he found claws and fists at the ends of his arms.

But he hadn't made the grade. There was a weak kink somewhere. Some of his buddies said he had no luck, but Sweezy's thinking carried him past this easy explanation. It was deeper than merely no luck.

The evidence was plentiful that something was wrong. First there had been the juvenile court, then the Tombs and night court and Blackwell's Island. Every time he tried to lift something worth while, to snatch a girl's purse, or stick up some lone pavement-pounder at night, something went wrong.

This last time, the jury case. He'd midrifted a night-bird with the hard snout of a blue automatic and lifted a little wad of paper money. But the guy put up an awful holler about a wife and kid and how that was all the jack between them and the cold street.

"Chee," complained Sweezy, "whatcha puttin' up a squeak like that for? I ain't seen the inside of a hash joint all day meself."

"My little kiddie," pleaded the victim. "Have a heart. A little smilin' feller that holds his milk-bottle with both hands and——"

"Take it," wailed Sweezy, shoving the money back. "Somethin' always happens to me. I never pick the right bird."

Sweezy began backing off and jamming the gun into his pocket. And in the handicapped position he found himself looking into the black eye of a gun in the hands of the bird—who turned out to be a plain-clothes slicker that not only slipped the handcuffs on Sweezy but also slipped enough money into Sweezy's pockets, on the way to the station, to back up the stick-up charges he made. When Sweezy was searched the goods were on him.

To rub it in, Sergeant Blue dropped in from headquarters and joked Sweezy, as he had been doing for several years, on being a failure at crime.

"You've never pulled a stunt yet and got away with it, anything worth mentionin', have ye, Sweezy?" he would say.

Sweezy hadn't. And that was why he started in on some hard thinking. He was intent on getting the low-down on himself.

Around the underworld hang-outs, in the back rooms of joints, Sweezy moodily sipped at his mugs of beer and tried to figure it out. But he had no wide perspective of himself and he did not get far. He went around in a circle—failure on one side and a desire to be efficient in crime on the other.

How he longed to pull one stunt successfully! Just to crow over old Blue. To pull it so successfully, and pull such a big one,

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that he could risk sticking the wad of money under the sergeant's nose.

Sometimes, with the foam on his beer ticking and shrinking as he forgot to drink, fear would undulate along his spine and sweat would mist around his eyes lest it was written on the wall that he was never, never to pull a job and get away with it. A real job, that would save his self-respect.

He thought and thought until his ideas got into a jumble, then he took the count and went to a movie.

The film, a hick play as Sweezy interpreted it, showed a clever New Yorker out at the edge of things in the West induce an unsophisticated ranchman to turn over a deed for his half-million acres for a quarter interest in a mine that never existed. This bit of business finished, Sweezy grunted to his pal, slapped himself heartily across one leg, and left the theater.

Sweezy forsook petty crookedness for the time and found a job washing dishes in a beanery so as to accumulate a little money to go out West on. This caused his pal to complain bitterly that the movies were demoralizing with their examples of honest work repaid, or of big profits out at the edge of things. More than one good gangster had been misled by such phony stuff. Censorship was needed, that was what.

It wasn't as bad, however, as the pal thought, for Sweezy had not turned honest. It was simply cash that he was after. He took his daily pay and played a roulette wheel at night, until about three weeks later, when luck, or the magnets under the table, or something, went wrong for the house, and Sweezy made a bit of a killing. Then the scum of the slums, old Blue's pet aversion, hit for the far West, the land of hicks and dupes. He went the absolute limit—he bought a ticket for Chicago.

A day showed him his mistake. He went to Denver, feeling as if he were cutting himself off from civilization. Out at the edge of things, realities looked different from what they did in the movies. Denver had strange ways and strange cops and alleys, and not a ranch nor a gullible ranchman. Sweezy would have turned back, except that the longing to perform one successful money-making crime was too urgent. It was an obsession with him. He had almost pioneer quality, and kept on.

After Denver, Colorado Springs, which was worse, with Pueblo worser and Trinidad worstest—until he got to Raton, where words failed him. After Raton he became demoralized with misery and poverty and went from town to town, and from ranch to remote ranch, looking, like a stray dog, for a place to curl down and a bite to eat.

And now Sweezy cursed the movies for a demoralizing propaganda, yet in the back of his mind the resolve still stood that he was going to pull a big job, and go back and crow at Sergeant Blue.

It was in this dilapidated state that Sweezy arrived all unknowingly at the ranch of Hiram Sheppard one nightfall in September, a while before the Fall round-up and big money coming in from the cattle buyers. It had been a warm day but the keen evening wind of the altitude cut through his dusty coat, yet despite this his attention was seized, and he paused down below the house and corral and watering-trough, by the bole of a sturdy pine, to look out over the country.

Sunset, lavenders, mountains, blues and blacks, and miles upon miles of—well, Sweezy said it:

"Nothin' but miles," he sneered. "Miles is all they've got out here. Blast the movies! Miles and miles, but——"

Awe crept into his thoughts and his eyes as he gazed at God's gorgeousness over the world.

"She looks like Fif' Avenue when the gold-mounted autos is out and the dames is there in their paint and sparklers!"

He turned to regard the place he had come to, and started on up the slope wishing there could be one ranch without cowboys to josh him with their mysterious questions and over-his-head talk. Every step he expected to see some of them, or to meet the big boss himself who would eye him scornfully and show him to the men's quarters with word to the cook to "feed this." Just like a dog.

It came to him like a slap that no one was stirring around the place. There was no noise, no—nothing. No horses, no cattle, no dog, not even a burro, so that when presently he caught sight of a man coming through a heavy corral gate he was startled.

The man was big, a big, old man, clean shaven and heavy jowled, with white locks on his shoulders, a sort of majestic man.

Sweezy waited to be seen, but the man swung along the path and was about to pass. In a panic that he might lose his supper and

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a bed, the slum bred one cried out shrilly—

"Hey, mister!"

White Locks stopped with a jerk, one hand going to his side but finding no holster. He stood there like bronze figure, staring back over one shoulder.

"Where you going, mister?"

Sweezy was breezy with the question, friendly, ingratiating. One could almost see a little fawning, frowzy, beaten puppy tail wagging with the shy hope of a bone being thrown to him.

The big man, in the changed light, looked now like a copper statue—he was amazingly red—that could not move at all, except that the wind stirred the white hair. He stared so unwaveringly that Sweezy was gripped with sudden fear. Maybe this was some new kind of ghost!

"Hey, mister!" pleaded Sweezy softly, ready to run.

The figure made some undefinable movement. Sweezy saw the arms bulging through the shirt, and the great hands.

"Chee, youse big slob!" he began breezily again with the sort of glib talk that had turned the ranchmen against him everywhere he went. "Betcha youse got forty t'ousand dollars wort' of knock-outs parked in that right biff o' yours!"

The man's statuesqueness, his grimness and mystery and silence disintegrated in a sharp yelp—

"Wher'd you come from?"

"N'York."

"Git out! Git off o' my land! Go before I chew you up and spit ye out!"

"Mister," begged the little man, backing off, "I ain't had no supper since last night. I'll swab the dishes, I'll——"

"Git!"

Sweezy, weary to faintness, gave in at this blast and began to run stumblingly along the road. Whereupon the old man called out even more loudly.

"Come here! Come back here!"

The wizened and dwarfy young man stopped, puzzled, and blubbering to himself about batty birds with white hair, started back.

"I'm Hiram Sheppard," the giant informed with a bellow. "King Hiram, they call me, an' mean to be obeyed. Hear me? When I say go, go; and when I say come here, come!"

And King Hiram, having been obeyed in both instances and seeing the weariness of the stranger, was mollified. He changed his tune.

"Why, plague take it, man, you look plumb underfed. Come on up to the shanty. I'll feed ye, even if ye are from New York. I was from there myself once. Come on, foller me. You say you can wash dishes?"

TWO men sat on the front porch where the November afternoon sun poured down between the great skyward pines. Down the slope below the corral the call and answer of rollicking cowboys could be heard. Out of a long silence copper-colored King Hiram spoke abruptly:

"You've been here five weeks tomorrow. When you leaving?"

"Ain't leaving."

The old man chuckled so that his white locks shook and his red face went redder.

"The cow-hands will be leaving tomorrow," old Sheppard went on. "Market stuff is all in the pasture ready for the buyers. They'll be right there, too, when wanted. Know why? 'Cause I've got the best fence in the state. Cedar posts every twenty feet, and seven wires. 'S'where most o' my money's gone for the last fifteen year. You'd a spoke of that fence if you had eyes for such. Know what it means?"

"What?" asked the pert, wizened little Sweezy.

"Means I don't have to go chasing all over creation for my stock. Means I don't have to keep a gang o' hands, riding to and fro. That's why the crew'll be leaving tomorrow. But I don't like any more to be left alone."

That was the sort of talk Sweezy had been wanting to hear, talk of his staying. So he blew on the embers.

"I like this street," he said.

His movement of the hand took in the ten thousand square miles before their eyes, of mountains and green grass-land, and cattle in long windrows across the distant hills, and colors of Autumn, and even the rough-bark pines right before their noses, giving that piney fragrance. And Sweezy told the truth. He did like it. Hiram chuckled at the quaint calling of the country a street, and because he liked what his companion had said about liking the country.

"Good for you," he exclaimed, and added something he had never used before. "Good for you, Dave."

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Sweezy stirred embarrassedly and a pinching came up in his throat. He had never been called Dave before in all his days except by a juvenile court mother whom he loved so much that he stole American beauty roses for her and got into deeper trouble.

"Would you want to stay all Winter—Dave?"

"All—Winter," answered Dave.

But Sweezy refused to be drawn from his secret purpose by sentiment. He shook away that sweet tasting "Dave" and pasted his thought on what he had planned to do. Old King Hiram would sell some stuff pretty soon and be paid a lot of money.

Sweezy realized that it was up to him to have a gold brick ready for the ranchman by the time the cash would be in the bank.

One successful job! He dreamed of it there in the warm sun. To crow over Sergeant Blue! To know, inside himself, that he was not a failure! He forgot that "Dave" name in the jazzy thrill of the other love, and began to whistle gaily.

"Wope, what's that!" exclaimed Hiram. "Didn't know you was a music-box, too, Dave."

"Don't gimme the razz, mister. Sure, I can tooa-da-toot when I'm easy in my grub-bag and think-box."

King Hiram laughed. He liked this queer talk. He found an interest in the shrewd little man, and would chuckle and sputter in the kitchen of evenings when Dave got strung out on the stories that made his life look like one continual pursuit by the police. Seeing the old man's interest, Sweezy began to stretch the yarns, roping and branding for his own all the police court and back-room tales he had ever heard. He was always the righteous hero. He had learned the morals of the movies.

"I never was the fish," he'd say, "to pull a granny that would put me in Dutch with the law. Y'unnerstan', I was honest."

"Yeah, yeah," Hiram would answer. "Y'c'n see that."

And now on the porch in the sun Hiram, thinking of this perhaps, said—

"Never saw a right good whistler that was dishonest, did you?"

"Never!" Sweezy averred hastily, and added to himself, "Wot a hick he is."

"You're honest enough for a cowman," Hiram declared.

"Honest enough for a cop, even," Sweezy agreed with a grin.

"Honest enough for a cowman. You'll have to be a cowman. I'll learn ye."

"No!" protested Sweezy sharply, thinking of the hard work.

"Learn ye to ride and——"

"No! I won't learn to ride no buckin' bronc."

"You will if I say so——!"

The words sort of pinged in the air and hung there, while Sweezy slid off the porch out of reach of Hiram's boot. Hiram got up, to defend his title of king.

"You will if I say so——!"

"No!" shrieked Sweezy. "I'll leave first."

King Hiram's irascible nature was uppermost. It was his hobby, his sin and his curse that he must be obeyed. He never went to town in the early days without getting into a fight.

"Get out o' my sight!" he bellowed.

He would have killed, in these sudden furies, with his bare fists or been obeyed. Sweezy had seen enough in the five weeks to know it, and he disappeared now without argument.

He went down to the cow-hands. He disliked them. They laughed at his talk, and laughed harder when he tried to talk like them. And they drawled back and forth over his head a facetiousness that he could not answer.

"Y'ever see a Noo Yorker?" one of them asked now, over the job of mending a girth.

"Naw. Understand they don't talk English," answered another.

"Sho' they don't. They talk ginny, and dago, and the like o' that."

"All big fellers, too, in New York."

"Yeah, great big boys—or little bitsa scoots like—well, not to mention any names."

What could Sweezy say? This time he ignored the banter with a startling question.

"What way do you ride one o' these cattle busses, mister?"

"Straddle, head up and feet down," came the cautious answer. "You all thinkin' about takin' a conveyance some'ers, Mayor o' Noo York?"

"Mister Hiram says I gotta learn to pilot one of these cow planes."

The five men stood in mute tracks before the meaning of this announcement and the opportunity it gave them. Every eye turned instinctively toward a bitter looking

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bay tethered near a rocky cart that had dumped them all at one time or another.

"It'll be pure murder," hoarsely protested the owner.

"Lemme ride some slow freight the first time," begged Sweezy.

"Little thing, like a yearling calf maybe?" came the sneer.

"Calf! Say!" Sweezy took hold enthusiastically.

The riding demons looked around. The nearest of the cow kind was a red yearling steer nosing the wreck of a salt barrel. In a moment he was dangling on the end of a cow-hand's rope. By the difficulty the five had in saddling the youngster, Sweezy should have been warned, but he wasn't. He failed even to *sabe* the subdued glee of the men.

They headed the calf toward the house and sat the aspirant for riding honors in the saddle. The calf squatted like a baby partridge, wondering which way to explode.

"Hold on! Hold on!" the men shouted.

Sweezy seized cantle and horn just as the red yearling lunged. At what begun to happen Sweezy was more surprized than when the jury acquitted him. That calf was a trolley car on a wavy track, a taxi on a torn-up street, a scenic railway on a rampage. But Sweezy held on, looking like a rag doll shaken by a pup.

The red steer, bellowing and spraddling and leaping, went in the general direction of the path toward the house. In a moment King Hiram came tearing into sight yelling profanely that his cook was ruined. He bellowed for Sweezy to let go and fall off. Sweezy tried to do this, but he seemed to be without weight either to stick tight to the saddle or to drop back into it when the calf shot him up. It seemed to him that he could not get a purchase anywhere to throw himself sidewise.

Eventually he was detached from the saddle and pasted to the hard ground. Soon after that King Hiram picked him up tenderly and, while Dave spat blood and curses, carried him to the easy chair on the porch. And when Dave got his breath he began to make threats:

"I will learn to ride! I'll show 'em!"

The cow-hands came tearing up to the porch, but Hiram drove them back like a woman shoos chickens from the yard. His concern was all for Dave, whose wrinkled old face was grimly set.

"I will learn to ride!" swore Sweezy.

"Sure you will," agreed Hiram. "You've got the stuff cowmen are made of."

The old ranchman went on at such length and with such praise that in a minute Dave was grinning, down inside himself, at how he was getting Hiram on his hip to throw him, about the time the cattle were sold.

HIRAM never had his grass overstocked. Compared to others he had few cattle to sell. The buyer wrote a check to him for eleven thousand dollars. Heretofore he had put money in more land, in good fences and other improvements, and had given freely to his lodge. But in the last five years he had bought no more land, nor made costly improvements, and he had fulfilled his pledge to his lodge. So he sent the money to two banks for safe keeping.

"Makes just forty thousand I got tucked away in country banks," he told Dave with an air of pride and satisfaction.

Forty thousand! It made the city boy's head swim. To carry off that sum and stick it under Blue's nose for a smell. He could paint the town red with that, could drag the women away from the other guys, even be a Broadway king for a while, though that idea was a bit vague. The thought that was the biggest with him, but that he did not formulate at all, was that he could prove to himself that he was no failure.

"You'd ought to shove that jack into action," he answered old Hiram.

"What kind of action? What can you suggest, sonny?"

"I'll think of something, mister. Chee, you bet!"

"Much obliged, Dave."

Dave set in to another siege of thinking. He browsed around among all the schemes he had ever heard of or seen in the movies. It had always been hicks. But these hicks out here at the edge of things were different kind of hicks. Like riding a calf, there wasn't any purchase. If he were back now, thought Dave, in N'York and Hiram came there, chee! it'd be like plucking a bird while he slept. And a day or two later he said to Hiram:

"Come along with me to N'York. I can dig you up some good investments there in no time."

" 'N'York,' " mimicked Hiram. "I wouldn't go there on borrowed money, much

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less my own. They might sell me a gold brick. Eh? What you think o' that, sonny?"

Before Dave could think of a feasible plan the banker from the nearest town arrived at the ranch one day and began to talk to King Hiram about Libery Bonds, calling them Liberties.

"They're on the market away below par," this man of money said. "All the ranch people and the town people are crowding the market with them."

"I thought," began the simple Hiram, "that——"

"Sure, lots of cattle money this year. But the cattlemen have got the debts of two or three droughty years to pay off. And the town people want to build, and enlarge their businesses, and invest. Everybody's offering Liberties. Chance of a lifetime, Hiram, for you to make a profitable investment; and safe, safe as the U. S."

"What's your bottom idea in this?" asked Hiram shrewdly.

The banker chuckled drily as he went on:

"We're choked with the paper. More than we can buy. You can help out and make a safe investment."

"In other words," summed up the old man, dry also, "I buy 'em and hold 'em a while for you, and after while you bankers come along and tell me something else, and give me a little profit, and buy 'em back to enrich yourselves. But if Eastern capital buys this war-paper it's gone from among us. How about that guess, John?"

John flushed.

"Well, no difference," Hiram declared. "I've got forty thousand to put into your Liberties. I know a good thing when I see it, even if I didn't buy bonds when the war was on. The lodge that got my money put it in Liberty Bonds, so it was all the same."

When the deal was finished Hiram had at face value considerably more than forty thousand dollars in Liberty Bonds, in seven cow-town country banks.

While all this buying was in progress Dave industriously kneaded his mind for a scheme to swindle. If he could get all that money together at one bank—and thinking thus he happened upon the idea that gave him his chance.

"What happens to your Liberties," he asked, "if the banks burn up or a pair o' soup kings blow de safes?"

"Eh?" Hiram was startled. "Hadn't thought of that. You're right, the bonds are different from a deposit. The banks are just keeping the Liberties for me for accommodation."

"It's your move," suggested Dave.

"Eh? Yeah. An' not later than tomorrow I'm going to collect these bonds and take half of 'em to Albuquerque and half to Santa Fé and store 'em in secure vaults."

Dave began to whistle thoughtfully. He felt success creeping up behind him. He began to rise in his own estimation.

Hiram was no procrastinator. He went to the nearest town and telephoned to the other banks to send him his Liberties that he had bought. He stayed in the nearest town, and in two days had his war-paper in hand. He demonstrated to his own and Dave's satisfaction that it was all there by counting it in the little cubby-roost called the directors' room at the bank, with its dusty spittoons and calendars of a decade on the walls.

When at last the beautiful paper, in rich orange and greens and blacks, was stacked in two equal piles of nearly twenty-five thousand dollars each, Dave could hardly sit still. He pictured himself pulling a gun, throwing the stuff into a sack, mounting a horse and— But there he paused. Riding a swift horse across country was not in his criminal experience. He could not picture himself a bold bad bandit on a horse, but if there had been some alleys full of kids and clattering women and fruit-carts to run down and escape——

"Sonny," spoke King Hiram, "you take one o' these piles of filthy bonds and go to Santy Fé and I'll take the other and hit for Albuquerque."

"Me?" quavered Dave, swallowing.

"Don't argue with me!" thundered Hiram, swatting the table with a heavy fist. "Obey!"

On the train to Santa Fé Dave worked out his plan. Hiram had given him twenty-five dollars, either for wages on the ranch as general helper and cussing post, or for the trip, the wizened one was not sure which.

"Soon's I get there," outlined Dave, so small he was almost lost tucked down in the corner of a plush seat, "I'll wire the old hick that I've put the stuff in the bank o. k. And I'll say I'm going to stay coupla days to see the movies. But I'll hit on to Denver and lay low for a month."

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He improved this gradually, deciding to send a telegram to Hiram in the name of the bank also. He practiced writing it:

Hiram Sheppard wiring you Sweezey's request. We have placed in our vaults $23,700 in Liberties in your name. The Bank.

After this he would loaf a day in Santa Fé then write a letter to Hiram saying he'd decided to give up ranch life and go elsewhere. It would all be so natural that Hiram would not, perhaps, make inquiry about the bonds for months. By that time——

"Chee!" Dave was in ecstacies. "I'll sell the stuff in Denver and before the old hick thinks about looking they'll be rememberin' me in N'York as a spender while I had it!"

Dave felt mighty proud of himself. He was no longer a failure. He felt so good that he felt sorry for old Hiram and retracted on the hick name. Hiram had been good to him, he reflected—a pretty fair old stiff despite his outbreaks of temper. Shrewd too.

It came to the scheming little man to wonder *why* Hiram had trusted him.

The rattle of the wheels and the sway of the car made Dave sleepy. He nestled down in his corner and almost dozed. The wheels began to chatter:

"*Tru-trust-trusted! Tru-trust-trusted!*"

All at once Dave shot up wide awake.

"Chee! If the old hick's trusted me with this many Liberties he'll trust me with the rest some o' these days, and with other stuff!"

Why not take his time and pull a good one while he was at it and had the opportunity? The chances could be lessened too, he realized.

"Chee, I'll make it a real haul too!" he told himself.

All at once he felt himself to be in the front rank of ability. He was one out of a thousand. He was proving to himself that he was not what Sergeant Blue had sneered about so long, a failure, a crumb, just nothing.

So at Santa Fé he did not send fake telegrams. He took the bonds to the specified bank—and thought of it just in the nick of time to have them placed in the strong vault in his own name. The receipt was in his own name.

Back at the ranch the next evening when he turned the receipt over to Hiram the old man took no note of the name. The matter did not appear to penetrate his thought. Nor did he compliment Dave on his honesty, showing how completely he had accepted the runty stranger.

After that Dave settled down to ranch life as it is lived—riding, handling cow stuff, out after coyotes now and then in the sharp mountain wind of sunrise, prowling around with Hiram, and watching the sunsets over the wide country from the porch under the sturdy pines.

THE heart to heart talks between King Hiram and Dave always came off Sunday afternoons when they loafed on the south porch and the pine trees soothed with their shade and their music. On one of these occasions Dave, squinting off to a distant hillside, made the observation—

"There's that timber wolf again, settin' on a rock about a quarter of a mile above the first spring."

Hiram paid no attention to the wolf, but remarked about it indirectly.

"You sure got a different eye from what you did have, ain't ye, Dave?"

"Got to have, staying in this country."

"Ye see lots of different things. Bare hill there now; six months ago it would have been nothing but a bare hill, to cuss. But now it's maybe got a burrow on it some'ers that a coyote makes his home. Or a bush with a bird's nest in it, last year's, made better than the hand of man could do, eh? And long-leaping jack-rabbits. And a brand or two of cactus you can tell apart."

" 'S'funny all right, mister. Ain't seen a cop since I been here. But trees, and sunny-shine, and miles. We got lots o' miles out here, mister."

"Miles and money till we don't know what to do with 'em," chuckled Hiram, his copper-tinted face red with pleasure.

"What?" Dave Sweezy was alert all at once, as he always was at the merest hint of money. "What you thinking about doing with them—the miles and the money? Especially the money, mister?"

The old Sweezy laughed ingratiatingly. But Hiram did not seem to hear the note. Instead he blurted out his own thought—

"Give it to you, Dave."

"What?"

"Everything—land and cattle and all."

"The Liberties?"

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"Everything. Hold back nothing."

Dave deliberately winked at the old man.

"Y'ain't seen a liar around here today, have ye, mister?" he asked significantly.

"Shut up!" roared the lion. "Keep still."

When it was evident Dave was obeying, the monarch of the hundred sections continued:

"You and me, Dave, we've been right good cronies. Ain't we?"

"Foist class, mister. Chee, yes, everything considered."

"I'm a mean man, Dave. Got a temper like a goring bull. I'm crabbider than a crab-apple tree. You know it and I know it, and I'm getting worse."

"It don't bother me," lied Dave, kindly.

"You've been loyal, sonny. Ain't never anybody else stayed as long as you have with me. And I've wondered why you keep hanging on. Have for a fact."

"Oh, just staying," said Dave, thinking of the Liberty Bonds and the big cash account.

"So—I've stacked things up this way, Dave. I'm getting along in years, seventy-three this month. Sure! Didn't think it, did ye? Well, it's the almighty truth, anyhow. So old I don't like to stay by myself any more, choring around and riding line now and then, and keeping batch.

"When I'm flat o' my back, in case I ever am, I'll need me a man to cook the meals and carry me drinks from the spring, and—to cuss. I'm some cusser, eh, Dave when I'm house-fast?"

"I'll say!"

"So—sonny, I've thought of this, if it meets with your approval: You stay on here with me like my own son, if I had one, ye understand. Which I ain't, not a kinfolk on earth. And I'll fix it up in writing and file the paper at the bank, so that when I'm through with the estate and gone on to the beyond, and put in the ground up there where I can face the scenery and sunrise for eternity—why, then, Dave, you come into ownership of the whole ranch and the cattle and the money."

"The Liberties too?" wailed Dave with a sinking heart.

"Sure, sonny. Why not?"

Dave felt as if the earth had fallen from under him. He knew no exhilaration at all. Here was the property being given to him that he had expected to steal and prove to Sergeant Blue, and the world, and particularly to himself, that he was a successful man and not a failure in his chosen field. Dave inhaled a deep, quavering, hopeless breath.

"What say?" queried the old man. "I might cash in this week, you know. But I want to be fair. I might live twenty years yet. My father lived to be ninety. Hope I won't. But ye can't tell."

Dave said nothing but sat on the edge of the porch with bowed head, making lines on the dust with one sole-edge.

"If I did live several years, sonny, why you wouldn't lack for all the money you want in reason. An' you could just about run this place to suit your own pattern, soon as you learn to. All I'd ask is that you'd stand by me like a dutiful son.

"All that you would have to make you miserable," went on Hiram, "would be my complaining and cussing, and that's what I'm paying you to tolerate."

"You'd give me the Liberties too?" Dave wailed again, despairingly.

"Sure."

"But I wanted to——" Dave started to stay "steal" but stopped.

"And all the bank cash too," added Hiram. "Everything, Dave, sonny. The horses, and saddles, and that eagle's bower on the cliff, and the sunrises and sundowns, and these sturdy pines—everything throwed in with the filthy wealth. What ye say?"

Dave said nothing.

"I got a hankering for your—your comradeship," pleaded the old martinet. "You wouldn't abandon a poor old steer out on the range alone, would ye, Dave?"

"I'll stay," blurted Dave, moving away. "I'll accept the stuff. I'll be a son. Thanks, mister."

But as David Sweezy went down to the corral his heart was heavy. His chance to prove himself was gone, gone to smash.

Inside the corral, out of sight of human eyes, the little wizened man leaned his arms on the fence, buried his face and—his shoulders began to heave.

OLD Hiram lay flat on his back in his bed. It was noon-time and the world was full of sunlight as he awakened, so that he chuckled and gurgled with relief. Nothing to be afraid of in open sunlight.

"Dave," said he, moving only his lips that looked curiously gray on his coppery

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face, "I raved around a sight in the night, didn't I?"

"You was restless, mister."

"Raving. Oh, I know, sonny. Stampeding like a herd on a bad night. Sorry, Dave."

"That's all right."

"I've been a mighty burden to you the last year; the last four years in fact, ain't it, Dave? You been here four years?"

"Just about, mister."

"The last year particular. But I'll be cut out of the herd in a day or two, sonny. I'm kind of looking forward to the change."

He chuckled softly with the happiness of a man facing a bright outlook.

"They'll soon be yours, Dave, the ranch and the cattle and the money. And you take a trip, Dave."

"I'll see."

"You'll see? You'll obey! Hear me?—Now, now, there I go *commanding* again. Pardon me, Dave."

The white old head turned on the pillow so that he could see Dave in the old easy-chair by the bed—a clean bed, made and kept so by Dave.

"Dave, sonny, you look different. The ranch country has changed you."

"But the people still call me 'Sweezy the Rat' behind my back," said Dave, who was weary from the long vigils.

"They oughtn't to. You're changed. The wrinkles are all gone. You're fuller. Why, Dave, I think you're a little mite taller too. And you don't talk so funny. You're almighty changed."

"Yes, I am changed."

"And they'll quit calling you the Rat too, once you come into this property. The land and the stock, and the scenery too, and the trees and the blue sky over them, and the miles of looking. Don't know anybody that's better fitted to take 'em over, sonny."

"You'd better trot along to sleep again, Hiram, so I can get about the work."

"Dave, Dave, you wouldn't leave me! Not today?"

"No. No."

"Then don't! Don't! D'y hear?" rumbled and sputtered the invalid.

Dave wished for the moment that his benefactor would speed his departing.

A change *had* come over the younger man. He was no longer ratty and wizened. He had the swing of an open-air man. And there had been an inner change too. Dave had *perceived* something of the country, had felt the spiritual, had expanded to it unconsciously.

And the more he had grown and broadened the more he had felt the suppression exercised by Hiram Sheppard, the old man's whims and irascibility. He felt beaten down, felt himself not a man, felt as if his growing had stopped. He *felt* these things. He had not arrived at the point of defining them in words.

Pretty soon now and the ranch and all the property would be his, and short pay, thought he, for all that he had put up with in the last twelve months or so.

The old man slept presently, and Dave tip-toed away.

It was far in the night that troubles arose again, as they had the two previous nights. The raving of old King Hiram.

It was incoherent raving, a pleading and a cursing for Dave not to leave him, a moaning and groaning and fear as of a man in a terrible battle, not against oblivion, but with himself. The man of flesh against the man of spirit, of evil against good.

"Dave, Dave," he protested, or pleaded, in a more lucid moment, "I'm between two fires, between the sea and the rocks, between two men—Dave, oh, Dave!"

It was a fight against an invisible something. A madness that finally left him panting, wearied to helplessness.

"Dave," he panted then, "I'll give in, I'll give in. *I've got to.* It tears my heart but—I've never relented for anything before in this gouty world, boy, but I will now.

"Dave, Dave, I've give you something that wasn't mine to give."

"What's that?" demanded David Sweezy.

"The ranch, and the cattle and the other property."

"Not yours to give, mister? What you saying? Spit it out!"

"True, sonny, not mine to give. Oh, be merciful to an old man. The deception has made a human monster of me, lad, *commanding* and brow-beating, and I want relief."

"Tell it! Talk out, man!" ordered Dave.

"Dave, don't be too hard on me. You know Kent Rushworth? Kent and me was partners out here forty years ago, and we got this ranch, and some cows—a start together, that's what it was, and then I

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hog-rooted Kent out of it. Cheated with a forged paper, and run him off with a gun. He went mild. He was always mild. Mild yet."

"And rich!" flared Dave. "Don't be telling me this to take my ranch. He's richer than you, Hiram Sheppard."

"He's made money," conceded Hiram, subdued now, his madness gone, a peace coming over him. "But that's no difference. Half of this land, and half of the horses, and of the cattle and the money and bonds is his."

"The Liberties too?" asked Dave.

"The Liberties too. I'm sorry."

But Dave laughed. He threw back his head and laughed. Haw-haw-haw!

"Don't take it so hard, sonny," pleaded Hiram. "Will ye make me a promise?"

"What?"

"To tell Kent Rushworth, when I'm gone, that half of everything is his. Will ye promise, Dave?"

"Yes, Mister."

"Thank ye, Dave. A promise is a promise."

And Hiram lifted his hand and they gripped hands, and Hiram slept.

Dave went out in the starry night, under the pines, and sat down on the edge of the porch, chuckling now and then.

"Now's my chance," he told himself, "to prove that I am a successful crook. Does any man think I'll rob myself of half the property!"

And he chuckled and chuckled at the curious turn of affairs.

OLD King Hiram was able, after a calm night and forenoon, to welcome three fellow ranchmen, old friends, who drove to the house under the pines to see him in his declining days, and ask if all was well.

"All's well," answered the old man. "I'm peaceful, and in a day or two I'll slip out of the herd and go on."

"Don't talk that away," whispered one.

"Why, they's no use to handle the subject with gloves on," responded Hiram. "What's to be feared of? Ain't no *croaking*. Not the way you see it. Man just wakes up over yonder, shy of a bit of the human greed he had on this side maybe, and a lookin' toward a different horizon."

"You've made your peace?" asked the deacon in the trio.

"You bet," Hiram laughed easily. "Last night."

Three men were all ears.

"Told Dave this ranch, and the cows, and the bonds, and the horses and money wasn't mine to give."

"How's that?"

"Half of everything is Kenton Rushworth's."

"Ah!" Chairs were drawn closer. "Rushworth's?"

"Back yonder in the early days," went on Hiram, "Kent and me started in together. He owned half of everything. I forged and cheated and run him off with a gun. Ken's mild. You know him. He said he'd bide his time. He said he would win by silence and peace, and he has."

"Kent," began one of the men to fill the gap, "he—er—never was vengeful."

"So I told Dave. And Dave promised he would tell Kent, later on, and divide the property equally."

The ranchmen asked sly questions. They obtained a complete insight into the situation, Hiram being in peace about it and trusting Sweezy; and as they came away along the path they spoke with heads close.

"We better not mention the matter to Rushworth at present," said one.

"You mean——"

"Yes——"

"Mean to wait and see if Sweezy the Rat tells it. See if he keeps his promise."

"He won't."

"Naturally not. It will be a good way to show him up, rid the country of him. Good thing we came around today."

"No room in this section for man like that—calls everybody 'Mister.'"

"Getting something for nothing. Hoodwinked an old man."

"Ratty—from the Bowery. Thinks he's sort of one of us."

"We'll hold silent till a week after the funeral—old Hiram can't last long—and then spring it on the country."

The other two nodded agreement.

Had the lives of these men depended on analyzing their dislike for Sweezy they could not have found an answer, except that he was getting something for four years' work that they had put in a lifetime acquiring. Gloomy and hard, they entered their car and drove away.

And that night old King Hiram slept with his fathers.

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AT DAYBREAK Dave sent the Mexican hand on a galloping horse to the nearest telephone to summon an undertaker and to broadcast the news about Hiram.

Dave set about necessary work, getting the house and kitchen ready for the coming of the county to the funeral, and feeding and watering around the corral.

The smile that had come to his face the night previous, as he sat on the porch and chuckled about the promise he had given, had changed. It had softened, had become assured, calm, gentle—the smile of a sphinx or a male Mona Lisa.

He thought of Hiram and his friendship and of Sergeant Blue and his scoffing.

"A failure," Blue had called him.

But no failure now!

Dave was going his morning rounds when the sun burst up over the clean land. He stood by the watering-trough, where the spring flowed beneficently year in and year out, and watched the red-gold mantle the east side of the hills and touch the mountains with a glow.

"God," he said reverently, "it's got any movie skinned."

And his! All of it his. Sunrise, and blue sky, and distances. Incomprehensibly, it flashed into his mind all at once, without seeming cause, what the weak link had been back in the city—why he had failed and failed. He started up the hill whistling, until he remembered Hiram and felt that such joviality would be unseeming.

By the time Dave had the necessary work finished the undertaker arrived. The first ranch people arrived by mid-forenoon, to be followed rapidly by others. At first Dave walked out to the cars to greet them, as was the hospitable custom, but they paid him scant heed, even sometimes brushing by with less respect then they ordinarily would have shown a strange cow-hand. Presently Dave kept to himself, but with the smile deepening.

The people of the county gathered rapidly. Dave saw new arrivals through the corral gate, then strode up the hard-beaten path, past the men on the wagon-box, past the women, and into the house, and sat down by old Hiram in the company room.

Sitting there dreaming, planning, smiling, he heard the women leave their hobnobbing in the yard and go to the kitchen to prepare coffee and sandwiches. Dave told himself that presently he would go to show them where to find things.

But for a little while longer he sat in the easy-chair. The thought was amusing—the reason for the weak link back in the city, the reason for his failure there as a crook.

He had been too honest, too kindly.

Dave smiled deeply. He believed old Hiram had been blessed with a sense of humor to make him smile too, if he could but know.

THEY who were present for the funeral were watchers. They watched Sweezy the Rat, watched him furtively, boldly, triumphantly. They whispered and peeped and giggled, and were tensed up too.

For the trio had not kept the secret. Beginning at luncheon time the story of Hiram's request to Sweezy began to spread like a plague. By the time for the funeral upon the hill-side above the house everybody knew about it but Kent Rushworth himself. It was the only topic that could hold attention.

"Sweezy don't know that anybody else knows," they said, thus creating a dramatic situation that put everybody under pressure.

"Sweezy's going to get caught—a rat in a trap."

People looked at Rushworth some too. He was a younger man than Hiram Sheppard had been. And mild—mild in a way. When it came to a matter of right he had the courage of a lion. But he was mild where pushing himself forward, or fighting for his own human greed, was concerned. He was godly in the world-wide sense of the word. He had come to the funeral of the man who had defrauded him and wronged him, for decency's sake, without rancor.

The first clods sounded hollowly on old Hiram's box in the ground.

"Wait till the last words are said," whispered the crowd, "and see what Sweezy does, before Rushworth leaves."

"Won't do nothing—won't tell, Sweezy won't."

Sweezy stood looking down into the hole with a gentleness and a calmness that antagonized the crowd. Sweezy kept thinking:

"I'm one of the ranchmen here now, in this great, splendid country. I want the respect of these people."

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He felt their antagonism. He wondered why it was so strong.

At last the spades, with a metallic ringing, rounded and shaped the mound. And the last words were said. But the crowd stood fast, staring at Sweezy the Rat. The crowd seemed rooted, except the fringe, which moved about slightly to see over the hats in front.

Rushworth was one of the fringe, not pushing forward. The pause of the throng seemed to puzzle him. He felt the impropriety of standing and looking at nothing after Hiram had been buried. As if willing to set the example to start decently home, he moved off toward his car.

Then David Sweezy broke away from the mound, and went striding grimly through the crowd, that gave back, and in a moment caught up with Kent Rushworth.

"Hey, mister," he called.

Rushworth faced about. Dave stopped close to him and began to talk. The people gaped.

The afternoon sun shone in the faces of the watchers, so that they squinted under the brims of their hats. There were perhaps two hundred and fifty of them.

The three men who had talked with Hiram and had let the story out, went elbowing along from different points when they saw Dave go forward. They broke out of the jam and focused toward Dave and Rushworth.

It came to the assembled men and women abruptly what Sweezy the Rat was doing, the significance of his act.

He was giving away half the property, when he supposed that he was the only person in the world who knew Hiram's wish.

As the trio converged on the two men, Rushworth spoke out:

"Why, that's mighty white and fair of you. Half of everything mine."

"Yes, mister," declared David Sweezy. He made a motion with one arm that took in the hills all around. "It's a fine clean country—land and sky, and we men have got to be clean too, fair and honest."

Rushworth laid a hand on Dave's shoulder. The three tale-bearers, hearing all this, put out their hands to Dave.

"*Mister* Sweezy," said one, "I—I wanta to congratulate you."

"We're glad to have you take Hiram's place," said another.

WHERE BUFFALO COME FROM

by Frank H. Huston

THE PLAIN Stribes believed that the buffalo were created yearly underground, coming out of a great hole in the earth in what was later known as the Texas Panhandle, knowing nothing of the return to the East in the Fall.

Some, indeed, claimed to have seen the animals emerging, and to be able to guide a person to the exact spot.

The large herds split up from various causes, chiefly for grazing reasons and in smaller bands eventually found their way back to the Texas and circumjacent plains for Winter feeding.

The tribes and wolves took their toll; some, weakened, unable to keep up with the main bands, were left behind and wintered in sheltered cañons that the cow-men later found ideal for cattle, but those that so remained were nothing compared with the numbers that found their way eventually to the more genial country where they were "dropped." In the last few years of their migration their physical structure changed. They became longer-legged and scraggy, a good exemplification of the survival of the fittest, as only the fleetest could exist under changed conditions.

What is known as the "woods buffalo" was merely the increase of the few that wintered north, becoming acclimated and changing somewhat in habits, coat, and structure, also. They were smaller, with thicker coats of a darker shade, but never seen on the plains.

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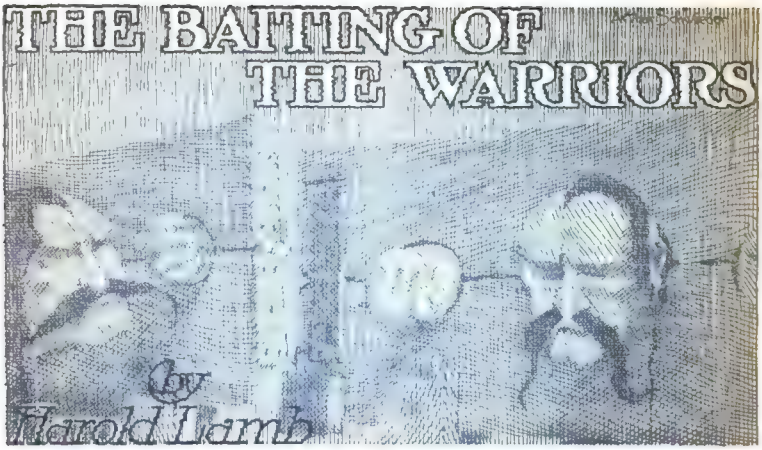

Author of "The Three Palladins."

AYUB was angered. Aye, though at his side hung a sword made for him by the master smith at Rusk, and between his knees was the black stallion that had not its match on the frontier—two things to make a Cossack well content with life in the troublous years of the seventeenth century of Our Lord.

Even though it was a fair, fresh morning on the great steppe, Ayub's brow was dark. His horse, moving smoothly in a long stride, was following the faint path that ran north along the river Dnieper. The ends of the high grass on either side the trail flicked against the body of the Cossack, bare to the waist.

On his right hand glinted the surface of the river—Father Dnieper, the Cossacks called it—the river that was the frontier of the Ukraine. Across the Dnieper were the tribes of Asia, the nomads, and especially the Tatars, the hereditary foes of the Cossacks.

But Ayub rode without thought for Tatars that might have crossed the river, and had no joy of the ride that, on another day, would have set the blood leaping in the veins of a warrior. He was disgusted because he had no comrade at his side. His *kuren*—his company of Cossacks—had gone from the war encampment of the Zaporoghian* Siech, leaving him behind.

Worse, his comrades had departed three days ago in quest of Gerai Khan, a noted Tatar raider on the far side of the Dnieper. Gerai Khan had been plundering the settlements north of the war encampment, letting loose the red cock—fire—and the devil generally whenever he struck a Christian hamlet.

Worse still, Ayub alone had been left behind, for a good reason. He was suffering from chills and fever, and his captain had pointed out that if Ayub should go with the company, the Tatars would hear him at night a day's ride away. His teeth were chattering like the silver heels of the warriors beating out the *hopák* and *trepák* of the dance.

So his captain advised him to mount his horse and ride as if a vampire were sitting behind him, until he was exhausted and sweated out. Then he should open a vein in his horse, drink some blood, and sleep until the attack had passed.

"We also ride north, on the far bank," the veteran Zaporoghian had added thoughtfully. "So do you gather up a hundred ponies from the settlements. Await us at the hamlet of Nitek. We'll cross over there, and change to the fresh ponies, for

"*The Batting of the Warriors*," *copyright*, 1923, *by Harold Lamb.*

*Literally the Men from Below the Rapids; five Cossacks of proved skill who were admitted to the war encampment South of the Dnieper Cataracts.

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Satan himself couldn't catch Gerai Khan on a tired horse. You must not fail us with the fresh ponies. If you do," he had promised grimly, "we'll put a bit between your teeth and issue you rations of hay!"

Hay! To him, Ayub, who had a bear's strength in his arm, and could break the sword of any warrior in the *kuren* with a stroke of his heavy blade! Ayub was angered.

Doubly so because he had failed to get a single pony from the villages behind him. The brief harvest season of the Ukraine was ending and with it the favorite time for Tatars to raid across the river was passing. The settlers were thrifty folk, almost as suspicious of the Cossacks as they were of the dreaded Tatar tribesmen; they did not want to lend any horses to be ridden on a wild-goose chase on the Asian side of the river and on one pretext or another they put Ayub off.

Ayub's broad head, shaven except for the scalp-lock that whipped behind him in the wind, had room only for one idea at a time. His comrades would need fresh horses to run Gerai Khan to earth. Only a single village remained to be visited, but this was Nitek itself, the largest on the southern Dnieper, and the richest.

At Nitek Ayub must get all of his hundred ponies.

Then, from a clump of willows by the river's edge, a horseman appeared, holding up his hand as a warning to Ayub to stop.

A glance showed Ayub that the newcomer was a young Cossack, but not one of his comrades, the Zaporoghians. Indeed, the stranger resembled no Cossack that Ayub had seen on the Dnieper. The high *kalpack*, the hat of the Cossack warriors, was white ermine; his black scalp-lock hung down on the shoulders of a shirt of fine, Turkish mail.

Like Ayub, he carried no weapon except a sword—a long scimitar girdled high on his left side.

"Stop," he said, as Ayub drove past.

"Can't stop, comrade—can't possibly do it!" bellowed the Zaporoghian. "If I draw rein now I'll be standing before Saint Peter at the heavenly gates in a flash. *U-ha—Hai-ah!* Speed, you son of perdition!"—this last to the flying stallion.

The stranger, evidently unversed in the method that Ayub was using to cure chills and fever, cast a searching glance at the high grass from which the black horse had emerged. Seeing no signs of immediate pursuit, he spurred after Ayub.

It was no easy matter to overtake the stallion, but the stranger's pony, a sturdy sorrel, was fresh. After a few moments Ayub heard the thudding of hoofs close behind, and a quiet voice observed in his ear.

"Have the Tatars taken away your clothes and beaten you with their slippers—that you sweat in fear of them?"

Now matters had gone wrong with Ayub for two days, and his mood was black indeed. He had not stopped because he did not wish to contract another chill before he could lie down for his long sleep at the end of the ride. The stranger's remark would make any Zaporoghian crawl out of an open grave.

Ayub threw all his weight on the reins, gripped the stallion with his knees, and jerked to a halt. Dismounting, he faced the other Cossack who had slipped from the saddle of the galloping sorrel.

"I'll hew off your head, mud-puppy," Ayub growled, "for that benediction. Draw your pagan scimitar and dress your Moslem shield. So——"

The long saber slithered out of its scabbard, but before Ayub struck the young Cossack tossed aside the round, bull's hide target that he carried. His scimitar flashed out, clanged against Ayub's heavy blade. Then the stranger bent his knees swiftly.

Had he not done so his skull would have been shattered by the second stroke of the long saber. As it was, his tall ermine cap flew from his head, cut half through. His eyes narrowed and he shifted ground as Ayub rushed.

The steel blades grated together, parted, and swung about the bare heads of the two swordsmen. They glittered in the sun, quivering when they struck like the heads of angered snakes.

Try as he would, Ayub could gain no other opening for a cut. The slender scimitar clung to his blade near the hilt, and never released touch. The stranger, too, stood close in, smiling a little.

Fever flared up in Ayub's veins and he lashed out with all the strength of his massive shoulders. But the scimitar met his blade at a tangent and turned it off. Before he could recover the stranger struck in—with the hilt of his weapon. Three tiny

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red marks appeared on the Zaporoghian's broad chest where the jewels of the inlaid pommel had pierced his skin.

With a bellow of rage, Ayub rushed in again, hewing and cutting until all power left his weakened frame. Then he stood swaying on his feet, sweat streaming down into his eyes, helpless.

The stranger, breathing a little quickly, flourished the scimitar in a brief salute and sheathed it.

"Hide of the ——!" panted Ayub. "What man are you?"

"Demid."

"Where from? What doing, you young jackal?"

"The Don," answered Demid laconically. "On watch."

Ayub sheathed his saber with some difficulty and wiped his brow. He was an experienced swordsman, one of the best in the Siech, the war encampment of the Dnieper Cossacks. He was ill, of course, and weak, but he knew that the younger warrior was more than his match.

"Come along with me, Demid, to Nitek. I'm Ayub, from the Siech, a hundred *versts* below here. In my time I've smoked my pipe in the mosques across the Black Sea where the Turks are thicker than ants on a dunghill; I've dressed the holy images in our church of the Siech in silk and cloth-of-gold garments taken from the palaces of Constantinople. I've stolen horses from the tribal herd of Gerai Khan himself, the steppe fox—across the Dnieper. —— take me if I haven't!"

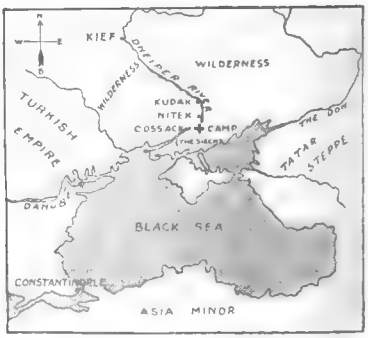
Here Ayub flung back his shoulders with something of his natural swagger. The clear, gray eyes of the young Cossack glowed, as if from an inward fire, at this recital. Although more slender, he was nearly as tall as Ayub who topped six feet six. His skin was dark as saddle leather, and a black beard was curling on his long chin. Now that his hat was gone—Ayub watched him kick the ruined *kalpack* aside as he picked up his shield—his shaven skull gleamed, save where the scalp-lock fell, like a plume, from the ridge of his head.

"A swordsman!" Ayub muttered to himself. "Good spread of shoulders. Fire in his heart, I'll warrant. And yet——"

He turned toward his horse.

"So you're a village dog, Demid!"

The young Cossack whirled, his lips drawing back from his teeth. But Ayub was tightening the girth on the black stallion. After all, Demid was, in the eyes of the free Cossacks of the Siech, a village dog. At least he was enlisted in the Watch and Post Service.



This was a river patrol, formed by the *boyars*, the nobles who owned most of the land in the villages along the Dnieper. Cossacks who had not yet joined the Siech or who had been rejected by the veteran warriors of the war encampment were hired to watch the river. Especially during the harvest season when Tatars frequently raided across.

Ayub could not understand why Demid was a village dog. The stranger was from the river Don, where the Cossacks were wild folk, living hard lives in the forests beyond the frontier. They were kin to the Gipsies and Tatars; it was said that the blood of princes ran in their veins. Certainly Demid, in wandering to the Dnieper, seemed to have gathered unto himself rare spoil from the tribes—a good sword, and Turkish mail.

"Have you heard the name of Gerai Khan?" Ayub asked thoughtfully.

"Aye, he vowed to give me a pair of red boots."

"Why?"

Demid, who never used two words when one would do, or spoke at all when a sign would answer, pointed to his trophies, the scimitar and shield.

"His brother's."

Ayub pulled at his mustache and grunted with pleasure. To be given a pair of red boots by the Tatars meant that a Christian

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prisoner would have the soles of his feet cut off. Then he would be left to walk home, dying, in all odds, on the way. The threat showed that Demid was feared by the tribesmen.

"Look here, Demid. Why do you squat here like an old woman making barley cakes? I'll take you to my comrades, and we'll make you a free knight of the Siech."

Again the eyes of the youth flashed. But, after a moment's thought, he shook his head.

"Well then," the Zaporoghian growled, "come with me to Nitek. When I've sweated out his demon of sickness and slept it off, I'll cross swords with you again. By the Father and Son—I can't let a village dog over-master me with a sword!"

Enlightenment came to Demid. He knew now the reason for Ayub's haste—his shaking hands and flushed face.

"Sleep here," he advised briefly, indicating the deerskin coat strapped to his saddle. "This will cover you."

Ayub explained that it was necessary for him to go to the village to requisition a hundred ponies, to be held in readiness, as remounts for his company which had gone across the border.

Leaning against his horse, Demid took out a long clay pipe and a pouch of Turkish tobacco. Then he produced flint and steel and tinder, striking a spark, he ignited the tinder in the tobacco.

"Nitek won't give you any horses, Ayub."

"How—not give me any?"

Between puffs of smoke, Demid explained.

"Last month some Cossack bandits—stripped a traders' caravan near Nitek—nailed a sow's ear on the trader's skull—made off with a lot of goods convoyed to Nitek—and the villagers have sworn vengeance against Cossacks—warm your hide for you, if you go."

Nothing that Demid could have said would have made Ayub climb into his saddle and start off to Nitek as swiftly as this.

Demid, smiling a little at the haste of the Zaporoghian spurred the sorrel pony after him. The two riders disappeared into the tall grass, leaving a broad swathe behind them.

For a moment the level sea of green and gold—the breast of the vast steppe a-fire with the glory of midsummer—was without sign of life, although life was never absent from it. A marmot raced out of the path of a wandering boar; the clamor of swans rose from the reeds of the river. Overhead, almost motionless, hovered a trio of hawks.

Death, too, was present.

From the thicket that Demid had left emerged a head, round and black and expressionless. Out trotted a small, shaggy pony, its squat rider stooping below the crests of the high grass until he came to where the two Cossacks had fought. In one hand he gripped a bow, ready strung. Another was slung over his deerskin tunic.

The restless eyes of the Tatar scanned the tracks in the soft earth—sighted the ruined *kalpack*. Bending down, he picked it up. His thin lips drew back from his pointed teeth, and he grunted as if pleased at his find. Then, silently as he had come, he trotted back into the willows, down by the river. Again the clamor of water fowl broke out.

The hawks circled lower.

NITEK was a village of some five hundred souls, serfs and freemen. The serfs and the land of the village were all the property of one *boyar*—one person of gentle blood who had come out with gold from Moscow not three summers ago. The fertile soil had yielded fine crops, ripening and falling to the reaper's hook almost in a day, so swiftly did the summer pass on the steppe.

That day was the first of a week's feasting. The harvest was in. The grain was in the ricks; tall stacks of hay stood up from the bare fields around the hamlet like watchtowers.

Although the sun was not yet high, the peasants were gathering in the square in front of the church and tavern. Wandering hucksters had set up stalls under the platform whereon stood the wooden stocks that served as a gaol. A troupe of ragged Gipsies had quartered their wagon on the river trail that led to the bank of the Dnieper, some two miles away.

On the bench in front of the tavern a captain of German musqueteers caressed the first tankard of the day. From within the dram-shop came a preliminary thrumming of a *balalaika*.

The village priest, warming himself in the sun, was reflecting pleasantly that his prayers had averted raids of the tribesmen for three seasons. While the peasants had been scattered through the fields, then had

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been the danger time. Now they were all within the mud wall of the hamlet, and—the priest crossed himself in sudden alarm.

With a shout Ayub and Demid leaped their horses over the low wall and reined them in, in the square. Sight of the sweat-darkened horses and the naked giant from the war encampment sent an impulse of alarm through all the watchers. The Gipsies, swift to scent danger, came scampering in.

But the tidings that Ayub was after horses for the Zaporoghians, and had seen no Tatars sent the villagers about their affairs, very briskly, in fact. The village assessor explained to the Cossack that most of their horses had been selected for sale. Anyway, they had few, very few—barely two hundred.

"Five hundred, you liar," growled Ayub, pointing out at the pastures.

"Not at all, good sir. And see how lean they are!"

"Fat as squirrels in autumn, you son of a pig. Where is this *boyar* of yours?"

He was fast losing patience. Instead of the noble, the mayor of Nitek emerged from the tavern—a red-faced Russian in a soiled neck-cloth. He stared at Demid, frowned at Ayub and fingered his belt, pursing his lips.

"How much will you pay, for a hundred ponies?" He asked.

"Pay? Are the Zaporoghians Jews—merchants and traffickers with fat wallets?" Ayub snorted. "Hearken, Bottle Face! When my comrades ride into Nitek they will leave their horses with you and take the fresh ones. Such is the custom along the border."

"Not our custom. What profit would we have in your foundered ponies, galled with arrows, belike? Eh?"

The mayor came closer, pushing aside a slender Gipsy girl who was holding Ayub's rein with evident pride.

"A fair, good stallion, this of yours, Cossack," he whispered. "Make him over to me and I'll use every effort to get the hundred remount ponies from the *boyar*, as God is my witness. A man of my word, am I—ugh!"

Ayub's stirrup rose in a short arc that ended at the middle button of the mayor's surcoat. The stout Russian stumbled back, gasping for breath. A shout went up.

" 'Way for the owner of Nitek! Make way for the *baryshina!*"

Ayub looked up, prepared to face a new adversary, and grunted in surprize. The owner of Nitek was a woman. And not a peasant wench, but a noblewoman—a *baryshina*. So much was clear to Ayub, even though the mistress of Nitek wore a man's boots, with high, red heels, and a long cloak. The horse she rode was a fine mare, and she sat astride in the Cossack fashion. Yet she was no woman of the steppe.

"Hail to you, wolfhound," she said in a voice that carried to the loungers at the tavern. "You will make off with no horse of mine, be sure of that!"

Her chin curled up, from the lace at her throat; her brow was white and the eyes that took stock of the Cossack giant were disdainful. To Ayub, all women were trouble makers; otherwise they served to cultivate the fields, and prepare food for the men. Well, and good! This one might be mistress of two hundred souls, and a thousand head of cattle—aye, and be a black haired beauty into the bargain. But she was a woman, and so a breeder of strife among men.

"What is your name?" he asked bluntly.

Just a little her eyes widened, and they were fine eyes—a fact altogether lost upon Ayub.

"I am the *baryshina*, Yaris Lementof."

"Lady-Miss Yaris," responded the Cossack, with rare patience, as he thought, "you would fetch five hundred gold *sequins* in the slave market on the Black Sea if Gerai Khan ever turned his horse's head toward Nitek."

"How——"

"The Tatars would carry you off, along with your horse herds, and cattle and sell you for a slave, Lady-Miss. Perhaps you would bring six hundred gold pieces. I don't know. At any rate it would be better to give my brother knights the horses they need to hunt down the Tatars."

The mistress of Nitek looked not at Ayub but at Demid who was smoking his pipe near at hand. As Demid said nothing to this, she bit her lip and gripped the whip she carried as if to strike Ayub.

"Go," she said quickly, "out of Nitek at once. Your brother knights—" her eyes flashed— "were the thieves that fell upon one of my caravans like jackals. If you are not out of the village when the sun is midway in the sky, you will be punished."

Here the worthy mayor edged forward,

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carrying himself as if in great pain and made complaint that Ayub had struck him. But the *baryshina* looked only at Demid, who came forward and gripped Ayub's arm. Fierce anger was fast overmastering the big Zaporoghian.

Taking the silence of the Cossacks for submission, Yaris shortened the reins in her hand and the brown mare pranced.

"We need no vagabonds to defend Nitek," she cried. "We have good men and weapons of our own. Now begone!"

She whirled away, scattering the watching villagers. A tall man in a white coat who accompanied her paused to speak briefly to the captain of musqueteers, pointing at the Cossacks the while. Everywhere that Ayub looked he met black scowls, and muttered threats. Demid glanced at him inquiringly.

"—— take me if I stir from here," Ayub vouchsafed moodily. "An order's an order. My *ataman* promised to stuff me with hay, if the horses were not ready."

"Sleep, then," advised the man from the Don.

After watering and feeding their horses, Ayub sprawled out in the straw of the tavern yard. He began to snore almost at once. Demid surveyed him thoughtfully, placed his long deerskin coat over the sick man, and heaped straw over that. Then, putting away pipe and tobacco in his saddle-bags, he tightened his belt and swaggered out of the stable yard, around to the front of the inn.

There the musqueteer was throwing dice, one hand against the other. Seeing Demid, he called out in broken Russian.

"You go out *sloboda*, to your post on the river, by the Cross! So the *excellencies* command."

Demid squinted up at the sky where the hawks, now reinforced by several vultures, hovered—black specks over the river.

"Send one of your armored women," he jerked his thumb at a pair of the Brandenburgers, sturdy mercenaries, who in gala attire of stiff ruffles, polished breast-plates and colored sashes, were wandering toward the tavern. "Nay, it would avail more to send one of the Gipsies to watch the river in my place."

The captain of musqueteers pulled at his mustache, not sure whether he had been insulted. But presently he shrugged and fell to his dice. Demid passed on, by the wooden church, to the gate that gave entrance to the manor house—a low, rambling affair of heavy beams. With its outbuildings and stables it was surrounded by a breast high mud wall.

At the threshold of the house one of the Brandenburgers stood guard with a pike. At mention of the name of Yaris, he admitted Demid to the hall and pointed toward a door from which came the sound of talk and clattering dishes. Demid strode into the dining-room.

SEVERAL months ago, on the highway, the man from the Don had first seen Yaris. The Lady-Miss of Nitek had been close on the heels of a wild boar that broke through the grass of the roadside. Demid had watched her spear the beast, and had helped her haul off the hunting dogs that drove in at the dying boar.

As with Ayub, the young Cossack had never beheld such a woman as Yaris. He said nothing to her, but thereafter he desired Yaris as he had not longed for the rarest weapon of the Turks, or the finest horse of the Nomads.

He took the Nitek station in the Watch and Post Service. Sometimes he saw Yaris in her swift carriage, passing through the village. Always she had a smile and a wave of the hand for the Cossack. Again, he met her near the river, when Father Dnieper was in flood, and the willows were bending in the swirling water.

Yaris laughed at the sight gleefully, eying the tossing crests of the tide-rips, sniffing the damp wind. She questioned Demid about the lives of the folk beyond the frontier, listening silently thereafter to his tales of hunting and of death in the wilderness.

"I have never come upon a man like you," she said. "You are from the beyond—" nodding across the gray, brown flood.

In her eyes was a longing, and a restless thoughtfulness.

She seemed to have no fear of the tribesmen, who raided close to Nitek. Yet she managed her estates well, although she was harsh to the serfs. Nitek prospered under her hand, for she had the gift of making men obey her.

Demid was troubled by the beauty of the woman. At times there rose within him the craving to carry her off, to the northern

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forests where there was no Nitek and no manor house.

True, the house was guarded well enough. Count Ivan, a cousin, had brought as a gift to Yaris the services of the dozen German musqueteers that he had hired in Moscow. Yet Demid, watching the lights of the dwelling of nights, on his rounds, took no though of that. Rather, he wondered what lay behind her words:

"You are from beyond the border."

So, before this, he had not entered the manor house.

NOW he was going to Yaris because his comrade, Ayub, had need of a hundred horses. Demid meant to ask for them.

He found the *baryshina* seated at table with Count Ivan. At the other end of the dining-room, below them, the lesser dignitaries of Nitek were ranged on benches—the mayor, the assessor, the overseer of the estates—all doing justice to a side of beef and a flagon of mead.

Demid, however, strode past the frowns of these worthies and pulled a stool up to the table of the *boyars*, resting his elbows on the table and gazing admiringly at the silver dishes of fish and sweetbreads and the long glasses filled with red wine.

Count Ivan, a lean man with a sparse beard and watery eyes, glared at the Cossack, and raised his eyebrows at Yaris.

"*Mort de ma vie!*" said he in bad French. "Death of my life!"

Yaris stiffened in her high-backed chair that was like a throne. She had the whim to attire herself in a silk *beshmet*, a kind of Tatar smock, and a cloth-of-silver cap from which her long hair fell to her shoulders like a peasant girl's. She was angry with Demid because he had not taken her side in the argument with Ayub that morning. Now, she supposed, the young Cossack had come to make amends. But his manners!

"What do you want? Why didn't you send the soldier with a message?"

The man from the Don looked at her with frank admiration, his gray eyes gleaming from the dark skin of his face.

"What soldier, *baryshina?* The dolt with the pike? Ah, he is not a warrior. The tribesmen from across the river would shoot his life out with arrows—*zick*—like that!"

At this Count Ivan prepared to fall into a rage. That is, he pushed back his chair and took snuff ominously. He owned five hundred souls—serfs—and he had once been to Paris and the court of the Grand Monarch. What an indignity, to be forced to sit at meat with a boor of the steppe!

No one, however, offered Demid so much as a glass of the wine.

"There are hawks in the sky over the river, *baryshina*," he observed thoughtfully.

"It may be that men are moving on the steppe yonder. Perhaps the Zaporoghian Cossacks."

"Do you presume to threaten me?"

Demid, who knew little of the moods of women, shook his head.

"Nay. But you would do well to give Ayub his hundred horses for remounts. The Zaporoghians are the only fellows who will rid you of Gerai Khan, who is a fiend. It must be that he has heard of you, so why should he not seek you?"

"Ha!" Count Ivan snorted. "I see very well—curse me if I don't—that you, Cossack, are afraid of this Tatar Khan."

He tapped his snuff box shut triumphantly.

"Most men are, *boyar*. Still, my fear is for the *baryshina*."

Stretching out his heavy forearm toward the woman, he upset one of the slender wine-glasses. Yaris made up her mind to teach the young warrior a lesson.

"Go to the other table, Demid," she said coldly. "There my wolfhounds are fed."

The Cossack looked at her in sheer amazement. Then, as her meaning became clear, he sprang up, flushing. The count chose this instant to laugh.

"Vastly well put, cousin—roast me if it wasn't well said——"

A glance at Demid's face sobered him, especially as the Cossack touched the hilt of his sword on the side away from the woman's eyes. Then, bowing to Yaris, the intruder strode not to the lower board but out the door.

After reflecting hastily, Count Ivan, who knew the temper of the men from the Cossack camps, hurried after him. Yaris, listening, heard low voices in the hall. Thereafter she caught the creak of the door, a scuffle of feet, and the impact of a blow. A heavy body fell to the floor, and for once the loud voices and clink of cups at the mayor's table were quieted.

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IT WAS mid-afternoon before Ayub wakened. Men were moving in the stable yard near the horses of the Cossacks, and the big Zaporoghian tossed off the straw that covered him. The brief sleep had almost rid him of fever; but his knees were weak.

Startled by his sudden appearance, the mayor and the assessor moved away hastily from the vicinity of the black stallion. Ayub looked after them thoughtfully, and satisfied himself that the horse had not been mishandled.

He was hungry, and sight of Demid's coat reminded him that he had a score to settle with the man from the Don. And, emerging from the tavern yārd, he saw Demid at once.

The young Cossack was standing on the platform in the center of the village square, in the stocks. His head and arms were locked in the openings of the wooden beams. His face was muddied and blood had dried on his scalp. A dozen of the Nitek men were amusing themselves casting clods of earth and bits of refuse at him.

Ayub rubbed his eyes and promptly forgot his intention to cross swords with Demid.

"*U-ha!*" he bellowed, running forward. "Rescue for a Cossack!"

His sword slithered out and those in front of him gave way as if before a maddened bull. The only one who stood his ground was the captain of the mercenaries. Him Ayub smote heartily on the breast-plate, denting the iron. The next sweep of the giant Cossack's sword disarmed the slow moving musqueteer.

But then Ayub was gripped from behind. Fists pummeled his eyes and hands caught at his ankles. He smashed in the teeth of one of his foes, with the hilt of his sword, knocked down another, and was rolled in the dust himself.

"It's my cursed knees, Demid," he shouted. "They're weak as a priest's wine—or I'd thresh these sons of pigs!"

Five minutes more and Ayub, overcome by numbers, was lifted to the platform and forcibly locked in the second section of the stocks, beside Demid. Then came the mayor, to lean on the edge of the platform and stare up at Ayub, and finger the key of the stocks meaningly.

"High time vagabonds like you were taught a lesson! Thieves! Masterless men! Runagates! Brawlers! You, of the Watch and Post, would insult our gracious *baryshna*, eh? Well, we haven't really begun on you, yet."

An angry murmur from the villagers interrupted him and he turned his attention to Ayub.

"You heard the command of our lady, eh? But you went and hid yourself in the straw, to be sure. Then you tried to cut down half a dozen of our young fellows."

He drew closer, and whispered:

"Next time you'll deal fairer with an honest man and come off easier. But there won't be any next time for you, old dog. I've a mind to your horse, and when my lads are through with you, after they've licked up a few more measures of mead——"

Grimacing, he swung away, calling to the villagers who were beginning to cast rocks at the Cossacks, to come to the tavern for a dram.

"Nay—nay, lads, the sun is overwarm for our sport. Let the thick skulls of the Cossacks sizzle a while in the sun, until the cool of the evening. Then we'll teach them a thing or two."

He led the way to the tavern, followed by the more belligerent of the Nitek men. Clusters of serfs and women came out to stare at the Cossacks, and the Gipsy girl drew close to finger the two swords and the coat that had been cast at the foot of the stocks.

Demid spoke to the lass in a low tone, using a dialect that was strange to the ears of the listeners. The Gipsy started as if she had been struck, and pattered off, her bare feet stirring up the dust of the square until she was lost to sight.

Ayub was suffering a good deal from the sun. But he reflected that the evening would bring his tormentors swarming out again, and he had little hope of escaping from the stocks without being crippled for life. His throat ached when he caught the clinking of tankards in the tavern. Presently, however, his mustache bristled in a grin, as he surveyed, sidewise, the swelling on Demid's head.

"Did one of the Nitek women slipper you on the sconce, comrade?"

He remembered Demid's greeting to him.

"Nay."

Demid's eyes smouldered.

"It was a pike-staff laid me down—by order of Count Ivan. They struck me from behind as I was leaving the manor house."

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The sun sank lower in front of them, until the shadow of the tavern stretched to the foot of the stocks. Meanwhile crowds gathered, to witness the promised baiting of the warriors, and men began to straggle from the inn, none too steadily. But at this moment Yaris and Count Ivan appeared in the square.

The woman, upon the arm of the Russian, walked past the Cossacks. When her glance fell upon Demid's face she started. Seeing this, Ivan bent his head and spoke smilingly. Ayub caught a phrase or two.

"Only for a short time—necessary to show your authority—no real harm will come to the vagabonds."

With a shrug, she was about to pass on, when a clamor of dogs started up in one of the streets. From the river side the wagon of the Gipsies came careening through the square, followed by several women on ponies, and men driving before them a handful of cattle. Behind these, in a cloud of dust ran children and dogs, mixed in together.

The cavalcade charged past the houses, toward the open steppe. Only one swarthy lad halted and raised his arm, shouting in a high voice that carried to the square.

"Fly, gentiles; gird yourselves and fly! Tatar raiders have crossed the river near you!"

AS THE shadow of a hawk's wing quiets a bevy of quail on the ground underneath, the news that Tatars had crossed the river hushed the merriment of Nitek. Then clamor and confusion broke out. Men cursed under their breath as they ran about; women fled to the houses, or gathered together to lament, high-voiced.

Doors were barred and unbarred. Presently peasants began to arrive from the outlying farms, driving cattle and horses before them. Dust rose and hung in the still air. Count Ivan bellowed for his musqueteers and his horse. The mayor was all for following the Gipsies, but some farmers, who had had experience of border warfare, pointed out that those who fled into the steppe, now, would be seen and cut down by the Tatars.

The blight of the Dnieper had fallen upon Nitek. And, among the villagers, was no one who could lead a defense. It was a farmer who thought of the Cossacks, and, snatching the key of the stocks from the mayor, released Demid and Ayub.

And Ayub it was who stretched his long limbs, girded on his sword and, glancing about from the elevation of the platform, let out his voice in a shout:

"Arm yourselves, dolts! Get horses! Meanwhile send your leaders to me."

Partly because his bull voice carried to every corner of the square, drowning the arguments of the villagers, partly because they saw Yaris standing near him, the men of Nitek hastened to carry out his instructions. The mayor, that is, and the oldest of the farmers came to the platform. Count Ivan and Peter were rounding up the soldiers from the dram shop and manor house.

"Hearken, you sons of dogs," continued the big Zaporoghian without any ill-feeling. "The devils from over the river won't attack until evening. They'll pass around the village, sending out scouts at the same time to watch you. After they are in back of you, hidden in the grass, they'll charge the village, driving the herds toward the river. If you stand, like cattle, in the square, here, they'll send your souls flying up to heaven like sparks from a dry brushfire."

In the presence of his hereditary foes, the Tatars, Ayub promptly forgot the baiting of the past hours. Nor did he think of escaping, as Demid and he might have done easily enough, on their fast horses.

"Have you weapons? Good! Well you'll learn a thing or two about fighting if Gerai Khan is nosing you out! Send a dozen of your young bloods on good horses, to scout the outer pastures, and learn on which side the Tatars are circling us. Let every man of you get him a horse and follow me. If you have pistols, save your powder until you are sure of a hit, and then say a prayer to the Father and Son. Many of you won't pray again. Now, cross yourselves, and make sure that your swords are loosened in the scabbards."

But the men of Nitek looked at each other, and at the wall of brown bush toward the river, beyond the haystacks and the outer pastures. Somewhere, in the sea of green grass the warriors of Gerai Khan were moving then, unseen—keeping to the hollows.

The men of Nitek muttered that they could not leave their families; besides, they were not used to fighting on horses—and the soldiers of Count Ivan were, even then, preparing to defend the manor house. They

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would not go, said the men of Nitek, from the village and its wall and the musqueteers.

In vain Ayub pointed out that if they tried to defend the mud wall, the tribesmen would ride them down; if they took to the houses, the Tatars covered by the darkness would fire the thatched-roofs and drive them out.

Led by the mayor, they were scattering to gather in their cattle near the cabins, and to erect flimsy barricades about the doors, when a new voice spoke up, halting them.

Demid stepped to the edge of the platform and held up his hand. He had known that the settlers would not follow Ayub's advice.

"Then one thing must be done, and swiftly," he said. "The Tatars are wary as ravens—they look well before they strike. 'Tis like the raiding-party numbers no more than a hundred. Give to Ayub and to me a hundred ponies, saddled. We have still a good hour of light. We will take the horses and bear ourselves as if we were guarding the herd—going to a high place in the outer grass, and moving toward the rear of the village, whither the Tatars are headed."

He looked squarely at Yaris.

"The Tatars will think that we are following a hundred Cossacks, moving before us on foot in the grass. They will not strike the village until they have searched for foes, and in the darkness they will not know for certain that a Zaporoghian *kuren* does not confront them."

Hearing this, the settlers gave an approving murmur. They knew the healthy respect the tribesmen entertained for the Cossacks, and that Gerai Khan must be aware that a Zaporoghian *kuren* was out after him.

"The demons from over the river," went on Demid with a smile, "may not flee like wolves, but 'tis odds they will content themselves with driving off some scattered herds, and leave your dwellings unmolested."

The listeners nodded assent. Demid's plan was worth trying. The level glow of the sunset was still strong on the knolls in the pastures. The Tatars would see the two warriors. That was sure. Of course the two Cossacks would be in peril; but they were accustomed to such things.

Then was heard the clear voice of Yaris, the black-haired beauty: "Fools! Clowns! *Mujiks!* Do you not see the trick the Cossacks would play on you?"

She stamped a slender foot angrily.

"I see it now. *There are no Tatars near us!* Demid bespoke the Gipsy brat, so that she and her people feigned fright. Now he would make off with a hundred horses and saddles."

Demid still smiled and this made Yaris angrier.

"Lies!" she cried, her voice rising, with the tensing of her nerves. "What man of mine has seen so much as the head of a tribesman? In my house this Cossack tried to make me afraid. It was part of his trick."

As one man, the assemblage turned to gaze frowningly at the distant fields, the outlying huts, and the surface of the steppe. Here and there a ripple of wind stirred the tall grass; there was no other movement. Overhead the hawks floated on lazy wings.

Yaris' mind was quick and clear. She did not intend to let Demid outwit her. And, perceiving her confidence, the men of Nitek who governed their lives by her command, were a little reassured. Scouts were sent out toward the river and returned—very quickly—to report nothing amiss.

Meanwhile Ayub's temper had undergone a change. He went among the settlers, explaining patiently, warning them earnestly. Some listened to him, others sneered. Finally he stood before Yaris, and bowed.

"*Baryshina*, is your mind as it was? Is your word unchanged?"

"Aye, Cossack—I am mistress of Nitek."

THE long twilight of the steppe drew to its end. The pastures became a blur; a scent of warm hay was in the air, already growing chill. Three hours had passed since the first alarm. Men who had been barricading houses, came forth, and women who—meaninglessly—had been tying up household treasures in sacks, sat down on the bundles. Cattle and horses trampled about in the alleys, while their owners wrangled. Count Ivan rode over from the manor house to report the house-servants and soldiers posted for defense, and to urge Yaris to go to her rooms.

Demid had brought up the black stallion and the sorrel, ready saddled, and now sat on the platform of the stocks, smoking beside Ayub. The Cossacks listened to the

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near-by groups arguing as to whether torches should be lighted or not. Some called for lights, others cried them down.

"Dog of the ——," observed Ayub suddenly, "that's one thing we can do. Give me your pipe and I'll touch off the haystacks. That will be a fine torch, comrade. It will be seen for fifty *versts*—a token that raiders are about."

Demid surrendered his pipe without comment. He hardly noticed the sudden flaring up of the stacks, one by one, out in the fields. The towering piles of hay roared into flame, swirling high into the air. And excitement grew in the village. No one could see Ayub at his work, because he had ignited the stacks on the side away from Nitek, and had raced his horse off before the fire gained strength.

The young Cossack had eyes only for Yaris, who was standing over a lanthorn, watching what went on in the square. She was fair, he thought, as the twilight on the river. A woman fit for a warrior to carry to his homeland. And yet—it was as if he stood on the far bank of the Dnieper, whence he would never cross to her.

GERAI KHAN and his horde struck the village of Nitek as the last of the sunset died out. By the glare from the burning stacks the dark masses of driven cattle were seen moving toward the river on the far sides of the fields. Behind the village a dog barked. Then came a soft thudding of hoofs. A woman screamed.

The score of men still standing by the mud wall in the rear of Nitek went down under the hoofs of the steppe ponies that leaped the wall. A few shots bellowed, and the soft whistle of arrows was like the wind in the reeds of the river bank.

Count Ivan shouted hoarsely and tried to pull Yaris up to his horse. But between them was the tall figure of Demid. The Cossack caught up the woman in his arms.

"To the manor house!" cried the Russian. "Ah, what a plight!"

Waiting for no more, and fearing to be cut off from his men, he put spurs to his horse. Demid, pinning the arms of the slender *baryshina*, looked about for Ayub. Failing to see him, he made toward his horse. But the sorrel had cantered off with some other beasts.

Demid walked to the platform whereon stood the stocks. He climbed the steps, and permitted Yaris to stand on her feet. Then, thrusting her head and arms through the holes in the stocks, he pushed into place the upper half of the wooden yoke, and picking up the key locked her in.

This done, he threw away the key, and felt about for his long coat. With it he covered the body of the startled woman.

"Dog!" she cried. "Unfaithful——"

"Lady-Miss," said Demid slowly, "if you would not be sold as a slave beyond the border, still your tongue."

Pulling out his neck-cloth, he placed it over her disheveled locks, tying the ends under her chin.

Then he jumped down to the ground in front of the stocks and drew his sword, picking up his small shield at the same time. The ground around him was deserted. Most of the villagers had fled to the houses; some were visible in the red glare, standing in the alleys.

On every hand squat Tatars darted, rounding up on their nimble ponies, the scattered beasts of the settlers. Torches flickered past. Demid heard a sudden discharge of matchlocks from the direction of the manor. Moving a little, he could see Tatars leaping their horses over the low wall of the courtyard of Yaris' dwelling.

No need for him to see the striking down of the soldiery with arrows. Once the arquebuses had been fired, they were not loaded again. As for the pikes—the scimitars of the Tatars would slice them down.

In fact he saw fur clad forms run into the manor—saw the glint of flames within.

"They are combing out your nest," he said to the face that peered down from the shadows.

Horror had whitened the ruddy cheeks of the woman and she was voiceless.

"They work fast," went on Demid thoughtfully, "so they must be uneasy. Ha—your village of Nitek is gay with light and sound this eventide, Lady-Miss. Behold——"

A pistol flashed from a group of Russians who were edging into the tavern. A raider swerved in his course, shouted shrilly and flung his torch upon the thatched roof of the tavern. He passed on, driving a cow before him. One of his comrades appeared out of an alley, running down a child. Stooping in the saddle the raider caught up the boy, and thrust him into a pannier attached to his saddle.

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Demid's eyes were alight, and his long arm swung back and forth by his knees restlessly.

"Aye, 'tis Gerai Khan, Lady Yaris," he whispered, pointing to where a small cavalcade emerged from the street of the manor. "This sword I carry I took from his brother, after I slew him. The khan is a rare fighter——"

The affray had broken Demid's habitual silence. But now, seeing the leader of the band glance toward them, he whispered urgently to Yaris to keep silence. For a long moment the Tatars halted, sitting their quivering ponies like small, uneasy animals. Their broad heads all turned toward the single Cossack, who stood before the cloaked figure in the stocks.

Demid made no move, and Gerai Khan had gathered up his reins in readiness to pass on when the suspense proved too great for Yaris. She screamed.

At once the khan headed toward them, with half a dozen followers. Demid leaped back on the platform, his sword clashing against the scimitars that struck at him. Covering his knees with his shield he held his ground. The Tatars did not want to dismount. Gerai Khan, a lean man with long hair and mere slits for eyes, grunted suddenly.

"*Kai!* It is the warrior who rode from the Don."

Recognizing the sword in Demid's hand, he snarled.

"Arrows—strike him down."

Seeing the outermost riders reach toward their quivers, Demid flung himself down at Gerai Khan, striking the chieftain full in the chest.

Again Yaris screamed as the two men rolled off the plunging pony. One of the Tatars climbed to the platform and whisked the cloth from her head. The others circled their horses about the two swordsmen, who were now intent only on their struggle for life.

His back to the stocks, Demid warded off the furious onset of the Tatar chief. Then, sensing peril behind him, he changed ground, cutting at Gerai Khan as he did so. A pony's shoulder struck him in the back, but his blade kept touch with his foe's.

For a moment the watching tribesmen hung back, so swiftly did the two adversaries shift ground—fearing to injure the khan. For a moment the scimitars flashed up and down, and parted. Then Demid's blade thudded against flesh and bone.

Gerai Khan's eyes opened wide. He took a step toward his horse, and slumped down on the earth. His followers caught him up, shouting with rage as they saw his chest cut open through the lungs. Thrusting him into the saddle of his horse, they were turning on Demid when a great voice shouted.

"*U-ha!* A Cossack fights!"

Ayub had not been idle during the fight in the village. He had come into contact with the Tatars in the hay-fields, and had quartered back toward the manor. Remembering that the Brandenburgers were drawn up at the front gate, and not desiring to draw a discharge from the arquebuses in the semi-darkness, he circled the wall to the stables. Entering the rear of the house unmolested, he searched in vain for Demid and Yaris.

Seeing the rout of the hired soldiery, he made for his horse, only to run into Count Ivan who was fleeing the building with more agility than his long and languid body seemed to possess. The mayor, too, was there, but being slower in pace, what with his fatness, his back and thighs were carrying along several short arrows. From the Count Ayub learned that Demid had been seen last near the stocks.

Not without using his sword did the big Cossack gain the open space in the village. Shouting encouragement to Demid, whom he saw struggling with a tribesman on the platform of the stocks, Ayub gained the wooden stand. He saw his comrade cut down the Tatar and take his place in front of the figure in the stocks.

"*Eh—eh,*" he muttered, climbing on the platform, sword in hand, "what a fellow! Doesn't he know the Tatars will fill him full of arrows if he stands there?"

Nevertheless, Ayub stepped beside Demid panting and grumbling at the weakness that gripped him after the fever. The Tatars squinted up, fingering their weapons, waiting for a chance to use their bows.

Then was heard, from the direction of the river, the long-drawn cry of a waterfowl. To the ears of the Cossacks, it was the cry of a human voice, and evidently a signal; for the remaining Tatars picked up their reins, loosed their bows hastily at their foes and galloped off, holding the body that had been Gerai Khan on the saddle of the chieftain's horse.

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A FEW souls, indeed, had been slain that first evening of the harvest festival in Nitek; but the villagers mourned the loss of most of their cattle and horses—a grievous loss in a border settlement. They continued to lament until they observed that by degrees their beasts were wandering back.

The ponies came first, and they were wet to their backs. Then lines of cattle appeared, grazing along the pastures. But the men of Nitek had no desire to go down to the river to investigate the riddle of the beasts released by the Tatars, who were accustomed to keep what they won.

The thing explained itself when a dust-covered Cossack *ataman* rode into the village square on an exhausted horse, followed by half a dozen warriors. He called for Ayub, who, interrupted in the act of pulling a barbed arrow out of his thigh, limped forward.

"We saw the beacons burning," said the old Cossack briefly, "when we were on the trail of Gerai Khan. We pushed our horses and met the tribesmen crossing back over the ford. They got away, of course, but the cattle they were driving down escaped them."

He had one good eye, the *ataman*, and it roved over the village.

"What in the devil's name were the signals you burned? Where are the hundred horses?"

But Ayub's mustache bristled.

"Hay," he said. "Hay it was, Father. And not for my eating, by all the saints! As to the ponies, send your men to gather them together."

He glanced questioningly at Yaris, who, attended by Ivan, stood near, listening.

The mistress of Nitek made no sign of assent or refusal. Since her release from the stocks, her mind had dwelt not upon the loss of the herds. She had felt fear for the first time in her life.

Pointing to Demid, who had just come up with his pony for which he had been searching, she spoke to the Cossacks.

"Captain, this youth slew Gerai Khan, among his followers. He fought him with his sword and killed him."

She shivered.

"Do not think of following the tribesmen, good sir, but rest your men in Nitek, where mead and fine corn brandy awaits you."

"Hide of the ——!"

The *ataman* considered Demid in surprize, and Ayub chuckled.

"So he cut down Gerai Khan? Well, the rest of the pack must not escape." He rubbed his chin reflectively. "Young sir, if you have heart for a ride this night with the Zaporoghians, come with us."

But while the Cossacks were cutting out enough horses to mount the *kuren* that waited by the river, Yaris went to Demid and touched his stirrup. She handed back the coat that she still wore.

"I dealt harshly with you Demid," the *baryshina* whispered. "What did you say to the Gipsy girl?"

"What I said to you, Lady-Miss—that hawks were in the air over the river."

Her face, shadowed by the long black locks, drew closer to him, and her eyelids quivered.

"Demid—I could love you. Aye, Nitek needs a master such as you. Do not—leave me."

The young Cossack looked down at her gravely.

"I am going beyond the border, Lady-Miss."

The slim hand of Yaris closed over his wrist with a kind of frantic strength, and she shook her head, finding, for once, no words to say what was in her heart.

"Demid—nay, Demid——"

"I could not sit at your table, in the manor house."

Demid glanced at the old *ataman* and Ayub impatiently awaiting him.

"Health to you, *baryshina.*"

He tightened his reins and put spurs to the pony. The old Cossacks divided to let him come between them, and the three trotted off into the darkness.

With a sigh of relief Count Ivan took snuff, and sniffed, as he observed Yaris. It was like a woman to cry, he reflected, when everything was ended.

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Author of "A Wife in Every Port"

"BIG UN," the giant colored fireman and man-of-all-work of the *Maggie May*, stood with hesitant bare feet in the door of the captain's cabin.

He had just brought Captain Daugherty a carefully brewed cup of coffee with a brandy "stick" in it, and was watching him with an anxious and agitated eye while he drank it.

As he saw the tilting of the cup that indicated the swallowing of the last drop he cleared his throat, shuffled his big feet and said—

"Cap'n, suh, I has worked fer you steady goin' on five years, ain't I?"

The captain put the coffee cup in its saucer with a clatter, and looked at Big Un with a belligerent eye.

"How much do you want to borry?" he asked pointedly; knowing by long experience what Big Un's preliminary remarks portended.

Big Un drew a deep breath, and a gentle sweat oozed out on his forehead.

"Cap'n, I wants—I has just got to have, two hundred dollars."

The silence which followed this request was so deep and so profound that Big Un could hear the waters of Galveston Bay lapping against the *Maggie May's* side and through the open port the voices of the crew of a passing tug-boat begging the crew of a sister tug to meet them on the wharf, man to man, instead of trying to sneak up on them and run them down.

"Yes, suh, cap'n. I is just obleeged to have two hundred dollars," Big Un repeated, seeing that the captain continued to stare into space with a fixed and unrelenting gaze.

"Is your wife dead?" asked Captain Daugherty.

"No, suh; tain't dat. Dat woman of mine is in good health, as far as I knows. Tain't dat."

"I guess you've been pinched and fined for shootin' craps again! You know I told you the next time you got in a jam with the cops, you would have to work it out in the street gang."

"Cap'n, suh," and Big Un's voice had the timbre of offended virtue in it, "I ain't shot no craps since dat last time when you bailed me out of de station-house. Tain't dat, neither."

"Then what is it?" asked the captain irritably. "Stow all this mystery! What do you want with all this money? Want to buy the *Maggie May*?"

Big Un showed his beautiful teeth in a broad, ingratiating grin. "No, suh, tain't dat neither. What I wants to buy is a rooster."

"The Tale of a Rooster," copyright, 1923, by William P. Barron.

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"By Gatlings! What do you mean?" shouted the captain. "Didn't I tell you to stow all this mystery stuff? Two hundred dollars for a rooster! I never heard of such a thing!"

Big Un promptly shut the cabin door behind him and stepped closer to the captain's chair.

"Cap'n, please, suh, fer ——'s sake don't talk so loud! Listen an' I'll tell you all about it. Don't git mad, please, suh. Wait till I tells you. This here ain't no common rooster——"

"I'll say it ain't!" grunted the captain.

"It's a game rooster, an' de out-fightenest rooster I ever seen. An' cap'n, suh," continued Big Un, lowering his voice to a husky confidential tone, "iffen we kin buy this here rooster an' take him down to Porto Cortez with us when we sails tomorrow, I bet we kin all git rich offen dem rooster-fighters down there. Yes, suh, I'll bet we kin. We will just reach Porto Cortez in time for de Fiesta of Roses—an' dat's de time de rooster-fighters comes from fur an' near to fight deir roosters; an' dey shorely is careless about bettin' on de ones dey has picked to win."

"An' cap'n, suh," he went on, noting that the stony look was still on the captain's face, which he had learned to read as readily as an engineer reads a semaphore, "you ain't goin' to believe what I is goin' to tell you 'bout dat rooster till you sees it your own self. I didn't neither till I seen it with my own eyes.

"Cap'n, when dat bird gits in de pit he just loafs around, with his hands in his pockets, like. He don't look like he is payin' dat other rooster no mind. He don't notice him no more dan if he wasn't there. Even when dat other bird crows and scratches up de sand, he just stands there, maybe peckin' at de ground as if he had found somethin' good to eat. An' den, even when de other bird hops on him, he fights back, kinder dispirited like, just enough to keep dat other bird's gaffs outen his hide.

" 'Course, dat makes de other bird plumb wild. He jumps up an' down an' crows, and pecks an' spurs. All dis time our bird, whut we is goin' to buy, he just fights back enough to keep from gettin' killed plumb dead.

" 'Course, dat makes all de bettin' two-to-one, six-to-one, on de other bird. Den purty soon what does our rooster do? He says, just as plain as kin be said, 'Oh! Lawd! dis here ain't no place fer a man o' peace!' An' den he turns tail an' runs. He runs fast an' swift, all de time hollerin' pitiful like, just like a rooster does whut is done whipped an' knows it's all over but de funeral.

" 'Way he goes! Lopin' aroun' wid dat other rooster right after him! Round an' round an' round, wid de folks all hollerin' an' bettin' deir las' sou-markee on de bird whut is chasin' him.

"An' den our rooster; watch' him! Whut do he do? Why, he backs up agin de pit wall somewheres, still hollerin', 'Oh! please, suh, don't kill me! Oh! please, suh, don't kill me plumb dead!' An' he lets dat other rooster peck him on de head, an' drag him aroun' by de comb, till at last he lays down, right squar' down on his back, as if to say, 'Well, come on an' kill me. Let's git it over with. Put me out of my misery just as quick as you kin!'

"Dere he lays! With his poor quiverin' legs folded up on his breast. Ready to die an' be at rest!

"An' den— An' den just as dat other rooster jumps up in de air to come down on him with bofe feet an' stick his gaffs right squar' in his heart—why, Blam! Biff! Dem two laigs of his'n reach out in a upper-cut kick! An' dat other rooster—why, he flops down about two feet away, his side done tore wide open! He don't never even know whut it was dat killed him!

"An' our rooster, he gits up off de groun', an' walks aroun' a little. Looks at de dead rooster sorter sideways like, an' den starts peckin' about in de sand just like nothin' a'tall had happened."

The captain, in spite of himself, had listened spellbound to Big Un's recital. Big Un, talking for a two-hundred-dollar loan, and aided by the natural eloquence of the negro race, had embellished his tale with the semblance of reality.

"An' where is this here rooster with—with the college education?" asked the captain, his own sporting blood stirring within him.

"Down to Mexican Joe's," answered Big Un promptly. "De Mexican whut has him to sell just got to Galveston yesterday. He says de onliest reason he wants to sell him, is because it's ag'in Texas laws to fight roosters. He brought dis one frum Mexico to fight him here an' now when he knows

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it's agin de law, he wants to sell him to git money to go back to Mexico on. It's risky fightin' roosters here in Galveston; I knows dat to be a fact, an' you does, too.

"Cap'n," continued Big Un, warming to his work as he saw the hard look beginning to soften, "dat rooster is worth five hundred dollars, iffen we kin git him down to Porto Cortez—it ain't none of our business why dat Mexican wants to give him away fer two hundred dollars.

"An' I can't figger out how dat bird learnt to fight de way he does. It's too smart fer a chicken. I don't ask you to take my word. All I asks is fer you to go with me out to Mexican Joe's, and let dat Mexican show you how dat bird cleans up on dem other roosters.

"An' den, iffen you will loan me de money, I'll buy him. I has already put down twenty dollars, all I had, to hold him till I could come an' see you.

"An' den, cap'n, when we gits to Porto Cortez! Cap'n, we kin git—me an' you—why, we kin clean up on dem rooster-fighters—an' come home with more money dan de *Maggie May* can tote! We shorely can!"

Carried away by Big Un's eloquence and a secret love for the ancient and once honorable sport of cock-fighting, a relic of his youth, the captain forgot his dignity. Before he remembered it he had promised to be at Mexican Joe's place at two p. m. to witness an exhibition of the pit tactics of Big Un's intended purchase.

He had no sooner promised than he regretted it. Big Un had departed joyously, however, and it was too late to withdraw his promise.

The actual exhibition of the rooster's peculiar fighting methods, while hardly more vivid than Big Un's recital, convinced the captain. Big Un left Mexican Joe's the delighted possessor of El Matador, "de outfightenest rooster whut dey is."

THE *Maggie May*, outward bound, had scarcely dropped her pilot before her entire crew had viewed the potential fortune they were carrying in the galley's choicest chicken-coop. Each one in turn looked over his ungainly proportions, watched Big Un or the cook feed him red pepper and dried beef chips, ground and mixed in just the right proportion, which was supposed to heat his blood and make him doubly ferocious.

By the third day out every available dollar of the crew's wages had been pooled with McDonald, the Scot engineer, to be bet by him on the *Maggie May's* champion in the coming cock-fight on the Fiesta de Roses at Porto Cortez on Sunday.

The cabin also shared the excitement. Captain Daugherty, after two days' fencing with his official conscience, had told Mr. James Shannon his mate, the story of Big Un's two-hundred-dollar investment, and the two officers decided to attend the cock-fight themselves and place some money on the outcome.

After what seemed an eternity to the crew, Porto Cortez was reached. After the *Maggie May* was safely berthed, Big Un accompanied by the cook, and Slim the Portuguese, went at once to register their champion for the cocking-main the next day.

The gaunt, ungainly El Matador, stepping stiffly and awkwardly about the sand of the pit, caused many lusty and challenging crows from the aristocrats of game chickendom in the locked coops about the ring, carefully guarded by official attendants. He was also the subject of ribald remarks and jeering comments from the attendants and the pit master who weighed and entered the names of the fighters.

"What name you call him?" asked the pit master with a broad grin.

"El Matador," answered Big Un.

"A noble name truly, *señor*, for so awkward a bird," sneered the pit master, and the attendants laughed.

"Yes, *señor*, that is so," replied Big Un in his best Texas Spanish; "but this here money, fifty gold dollars of the United States, perhaps looks well."

"What, *señor!*" exclaimed the pit master. "Would you enter this scarecrow of a bird, this mongrel, for the champion fight! For the purse of two thousand pesos! Why, *señor*, for this fight we have only two birds entered, and they of the very finest breed! Withdraw, *señor;* you but toss away your gold! Besides, the entrance fee is three hundred pesos."

"All the same to me!" said Big Un. "Cookie, give me whut money you boys has got, till we git back to de *Maggie May*."

And El Matador's name was entered for the last, and champion fight, for a purse of two thousand pesos; his antagonists being Don Pedro and El Capitan.

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The crew, assisted by the fruit-wharf loungers, unloaded the *Maggie May* in record time, and by the afternoon of the cocking-main she was two-thirds reloaded for her return trip; when all hands repaired to the cock-pit, except the wharf watchman and the second engineer.

The cocking-main was crowded from shady to sunny side with the élite of the sporting fraternity of Porto Cortez and the surrounding towns and plantations.

Every style, shape and breed of game-cock was there, safely locked in a coop de luxe if their owners were wealthy enough to pay the cooping fees; or snugly tucked away under their masters' arms in a wicker-work holder, only the head and tail showing.

There were many local favorites for the sweepstakes, but for the championship purse, only Don Pedro, El Capitan and El Matador. The first two were well-known local favorites, and the betting ran high. As for El Matador, one look was enough.

"How much do the *señors* wish to wager on their cock, should there by any takers?" asked the book-maker with an almost insulting smile as he looked at the homely fowl snuggled beneath Big Un's mighty arm.

"Here's de man whut does our bettin'," answered Big Un in English, making way for McDonald, who held the combined wages of the *Maggie May's* crew.

"Here are the *señors* who own the great cocks, Don Pedro and El Capitan," resumed the book-maker, addressing McDonald. "They are willing to back their favorites, who have never been defeated, for any reasonable sum—say three hundred pesos for each fight; or if the cock kills in fifteen minutes, as much as five hundred pesos if the *señors* wish to risk so much."

And he grinned broadly at El Matador who, with drooping head, seemed to be gently slumbering, unmindful of the challenging crows from warlike cocks in the coops ranged about the pit.

"Perhaps the *señors* wish to withdraw their champion. He appears to be sick. Maybe it is the molting time with him!"

The pit-loungers snickered at this pleasantry of the book-maker, and nudged each other.

"Well," said McDonald in his Scotch version of Spanish, "we are willing to risk three hundred gold on the first fight, with odds, and three hundred gold on the second fight, with odds."

Second fight! This was too much! The pit-loungers laughed aloud, in which the book-maker and the owners of Don Pedro and El Capitan joined, heartily.

McDonald paid no attention to the laughter or jesting remarks. He went right on bargaining for as heavy odds as he could get from the proud owners of Don Pedro and El Capitan.

"Surely, *señor*," said Señor Marcio Cortez, who was holding El Capitan lovingly under his arm in his wicker holder that bore the Cortez coat-of-arms. "Surely you do not for one moment seriously believe that your bird can hope to win against El Capitan?"

And he stroked the game cock's beautiful head.

"The book-maker tells me he would not have considered your bird for the championship fight at all, if the gringo of color, yonder, had not so readily advanced the three hundred pesos entrance fee, which goes into the prize purse. I say to you, *señor*, as a friend, withdraw now without wagering any more of your money. It is better to lose three hundred than fifteen hundred pesos."

"That is true, *señor*," answered McDonald. "And I thank you, but my friends here wish to risk their money and their bird. I do but arrange the matter, with odds."

"We have a poor chance to win, I know," Cortez smiled derisively.

But McDonald heedless of the smile continued:

"But as you have perhaps heard, *señor*, Americans are great gamblers, and also good losers. How many odds, now, will you give me? Surely ten to one is but fair when one considers El Capitan, his many victories and his fine appearance."

Adroitly flattering and suggesting, McDonald secured ten to one on El Capitan and six to one on Don Pedro, while among the crowd the cook and Slim, the Portuguese, took all that was offered odds or no odds.

From advantageous seats on the shady side, Captain Daugherty and the mate sat by the side of the collector of the port of Porto Cortez. They had had many dealings with this portly representative of the National Government of Honduras, and had found him as the mate described him

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"a good old scout." So they had let him in on the secret of El Matador's fighting qualities and invited him to come with them and share in the clean-up.

All about them the young bloods of Porto Cortez and adjacent towns hooted and catcalled, laughed and joked, or made bets among themselves.

When Big Un began to walk slowly around the pit with El Matador held high that all might see, as was the custom before the fight began, these youthful blades shouted in derision at the ungainly appearance of the *Maggie May's* champion.

"——! Look at him!" shouted one well-fed young *caballero*. "And be that the great Jack Johnson that holds this noble bird aloft? This champion of many fights! This Jack Johnson among cocks?"

"Ho! Already do I see El Capitan and Don Pedro stretched bleeding in the sand!" called another youthful sport to this one. "How many odds wilt thou give me on this El Matador? I am backing him against all comers, ten to one!"

The first called back:

"Ten to one that El Capitan slays him in fifteen minutes! Ten to one that El Matador does not live to fight Don Pedro!" and he held up a national bill for one hundred pesos.

His friend shrugged his shoulders.

"I did but jest!" he called. "Let me rather wager thee five to one that El Capitan will kill this El Matador in five rather than fifteen minutes."

"Here, young feller!" said Captain Daugherty in splendid English, after the mate had explained to him what had been said in Spanish. "I'll take your ten to one bets; both of 'em!"

The mate translated while the captain took out his wallet, under the flap, displaying a fat nest of bills.

The young *caballero* hesitated. He looked doubtfully at El Matador. Did the pompous old gringo of the sea know more about game-cocks than he, who had been raised among them? He could not be mistaken. El Capitan was a perfect specimen of flaming color and courage. He had never been beaten. And surely he would not be now by this ungainly, awkward bird.

With this self-assurance his pride arose. He would wager this gringo of the sea, ten to one.

"How much, *señor?*" he asked with a grandiloquent air, displaying a national bill for one hundred pesos, that he had wheedled out of a fond father for a birthday gift.

"The captain will cover the one hundred pesos," translated the mate, "and this gentleman will hold the stakes, *señor*."

And he handed the collector of the port a ten-dollar American bill.

"That is not the correct money exchange, but we will waive that."

The young *caballero* handed over his one-hundred-pesos bill with a trembling hand, and watched it disappear in the capacious pocket of the collector of the port with a jaundiced eye. He believed in his soul that he was betting on a sure thing. But—if— There was always a chance! This was his first bet of any consequence; the one hundred pesos was the apple of his eye. He used it to overawe his fellows. Besides, the collector of the port knew his father and might report his sporting activities.

The minor fights were pulled off before El Capitan and El Matador were called. When these were placed for position Big Un squatted in his corner, his broad black face beaded with the sweat of excitement and nervousness. The day was warm—really hot on the sunny side where he was, for in the toss-up for position El Capitan had won the shady side, the position of advantage. But for all of that cold chills ran up and down Big Un's spine and his teeth chattered.

Every dollar that he possessed, all the money that the crew of the *Maggie May* had or could borrow, even the surplus money of the captain and mate was wagered on the outcome of this fight.

He had seen El Matador's tactics put in practise, and he believed he would surely win. But if he lost Big Un was quite sure about what the *Maggie May's* crew would do to him. He would be eternally disgraced. They would tear him limb from limb, verbally if not physically.

He looked down at El Matador, held between his big hands, and two big drops of sweat fell from his forehead and made little oases of moisture in the sand.

El Matador was not suffering from stage-fright. He was asleep; peacefully dozing with his head held down. Big Un shook him.

"Bird, whut's de matter wid you? Here you is asleep when I has done spent two

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hundred dollars on you, an' dere is two thousand dollars bet on you if dere is a dime! Is you sick? Rouse yourself, boy! Rouse yourself!"

El Matador opened his eyes and cocked his head up at Big Un. Afterwards, Big Un swore the rooster winked at him. Then he dozed off again.

Big Un's courage failed. He had never seen a game-cock on the eve of battle act this way. El Matador took no interest whatever in the proceedings. He did not even crow! Almost was he tempted to withdraw, losing only the entrance money. But the starting bell tinkled and it was too late. With terror in his heart and a sick, sinking sensation in his stomach, Big Un set El Matador down and stood up with a mighty sigh. Anyway, it would soon be over with. El Matador would be dead and the finances of the crew of the *Maggie May* from captain to cabin-boy in a state of collapse or——

Big Un's thoughts were shut off with a jerk. El Capitan was getting into action. He was creeping warily toward El Matador, his neck extended, the feathers ruffled about his head, his wings held stiffly downward touching the ground. El Capitan moved cautiously and with his whole attention given to the movements of his enemy. He did no heed the applause that greeted him as he began his offensive.

His excessive caution was all wasted. El Matador apparently did not know El Capitan was there. He was pensively pecking at the sand, walking stiffly as if the steel gaffs on his legs were not adjusted properly.

El Capitan came nearer, making little angry clucking noises in his throat. He was so near to him now that El Matador was forced to notice him. But he regarded El Capitan mildly, with a speculative eye, as if wondering what it was all about.

El Matador was given little time for speculation, however. With a savage rush El Capitan came at him, murder in his eyes, his steel gaffs shining in the sun.

El Capitan's rush had been swift, but El Matador had been swifter. He wasn't there when El Capitan arrived, except with a vicious side-swiping jab which cost El Capitan two of his wing feathers and sent him staggering against the side of the pit.

It is hard to say which was the most surprized, El Capitan or the crowd. For a few seconds there was silence, which was broken by the shrill voice of Joe, the *Maggie May's* cabin-boy.

"Hot dog! That's the way, El Matador! Feed it to him!"

El Matador did not follow up his advantage. He made no move of any sort. He stood looking at El Capitan as if he was trying to puzzle out just what had happened.

El Capitan knew what had happened, however. And the knowledge filled him with rage and wounded pride. Never before had such a thing occurred to him. He would see that it did not happen again. And also that the perpetrator of this humiliating joke on a proud gentleman of Spain should pay the penalty.

On he came again, his long thin, muscular legs making mighty strides, his neck extended to its greatest length, a whirlwind of righteous rage. At just the precise moment El Matador stepped aside, with incredible swiftness in so ungainly a bird, and the red tornado of wrath rushed harmlessly by.

"See! See!" yelled an excited spectator. "The gringo bird is well-named! He fights like the matador in the bull-fight! He steps aside!"

And a roar went up from the wrought-up crowd.

"El Matador! El Matador!"

El Capitan recovered himself so quickly that he did a half-somersault. He charged again. El Matador did not wait for him this time; he turned tail and ran.

The crowd, whose sympathies were fast turning to the gringo's bird, veered again. They proclaimed their disgust and disappointment with hisses and groans. McDonald on the sunny side and Captain Daugherty, the collector of the port and the mate on the shady side, were able to pick up a few more bets with heavy odds.

The crowd, however, skilled in judging cock-fights, was quick to see that El Matador as a runner outclassed El Capitan in length of limb and staying power.

Try as he would, with desperate effort in his running, El Capitan could not lessen the distance between himself and the object of his wrath. Apparently he was the victor but he could not reap the fruits of it.

In his heart the lust to sink his spurs in the craven breast of his adversary, and tear his comb to tatters with his beak, blotted out every other thing, and El Capitan leaped forward after the smoothly running

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El Matador, whose long easy stride was so baffling. Around and around the pit they ran, but El Capitan came no nearer to his desire.

Big Un in his corner had watched the fight with his heart in his mouth. El Matador was playing true to form; in fact was exceeding his expectations. The negro had partly recovered from his stage fright and was now enjoying the fight as a true sporting gentleman with the blood of cock-fighting ancestry in his veins should enjoy a cock-fight.

It was otherwise with the owner of El Capitan. He was almost beside himself with rage and disappointment. He had already lost his principal wager, that El Capitan would make his kill in fifteen minutes.

But worse still, his beloved cock, that he loved as only a true cock-fighter can love a high-bred game rooster, had been made to play the fool before his friends and neighbors by this misshapen gringo bird.

And even now, deep down in his heart, he doubted the ultimate outcome of this seeming victory. El Matador did not appear to him to be running as a cock should run with mortal terror in his soul.

So the applause and cat-calls, the urging of the crowd to El Capitan to speed up, overtake his fleet antagonist and slay him, fell on unresponsive ears. He did not believe El Capitan could overtake El Matador. He could see signs of exhaustion in his own bird but El Matador ran as smoothly and as fleetly as before.

He continued to run until El Capitan was almost exhausted. Then staggering up against the pit wall El Matador crowded himself into as small a space as possible, and tried to tuck away his head with its exposed comb and vulnerable eyes beyond the reach of the beak of the avenger.

After one agonized squawk when El Capitan's beak met in his comb, El Matador lay sprawling and helpless on the white sand of the pit. He made no resistance whatever as El Capitan danced about him excitedly, but drew his long ungainly legs up closely against his body as if awaiting the end.

El Capitan stepped daintily back, amid the thunderous applause from above, and crouched himself for the killing spring. At last he was to put this strange-fighting bird where he could never fight again. High in the air he went, his steel-shod spurs held just at the right angle to come down with death-dealing force on the prostrate and apparently paralyzed El Matador.

And then something happened. It was done so quickly that only the result could be seen. El Capitan hurtled through the air, and fell a yard away; struggling and fluttering in a futile circle trying to regain his feet. He accomplished it at last, to show blood spouting from a hole in his breast. For a moment he stood swaying on unsteady legs, as his horrified owner hurried to him, tried to emit a feeble crow, and fell over dead.

El Matador leisurely got on his feet, that had carried him through defeat to victory and began nonchalantly to search about in the sand for stray gravel for his craw.

A wild yell went up from the crew of the *Maggie May*, and a groan from the ten-to-one shots who had to pay. McDonald, Big Un and Joe the cabin-boy were entirely happy. To have been happier, they would have had to grow larger. Their cup of joy was running over.

Up above, on the shady side, Captain Daugherty, the collector of the port, and the mate were collecting their winnings more calmly, as befitted their rank and station. With tear-dimmed eyes the young *caballero* watched his one hundred pesos disappear in the yawning wallet of the captain where also many other bills from the book-maker found refuge.

Big Un did not wait to learn what his share of the pool managed by McDonald would be. He rushed over to El Matador, seized him with loving hands and fondly stroked his feathers.

"Honey, you shorely has done yourself proud! An' he did n't hurt you nary time, neither, excusin' dis lil' place on your comb."

And Big Un tenderly touched the bleeding rift in El Matador's small comb, the only sign of aristocratic game lineage he possessed.

In the meantime El Capitan's owner had picked up the dead bird and made his way to the judge's stand.

"That gringo bird, *señor*," he said hoarsely, livid with rage and grief, "he does not fight fair! He has violated all the rules of the pit. And my El Capitan, my beautiful and brave! He is dead, *señor!* Dead without a fair fight! If El Capitan had been killed fairly, if he had been killed fighting

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gloriously, as becomes a cock of pure lineage, I would not complain; but this fight, it was unfair!"

"How come, unfair?" asked Big Un, who had followed El Capitan's owner to the judge's stand. "All de rules dey is," he continued, managing by a lingusitic feat of his own to mix the idioms of the colored race with his Texas Spanish, "is to put dem chickens in de pit together an' let 'em fight till one of 'em gets killed! Dis here El Capitan of yourn, he has killed lots of birds in his day, but dis here time he gits called home his own self!

"Supposin' El Matador here had been de one dat was killed? What you say den? Nothin'! Nothin' a-tall 'cept 'Gimme my money!' Dat's all!"

"*Señor*," said the judge politely, for El Capitan's owner was a rancher of no mean standing, "I have regret to say that the gringo of color is correct. There are no rules, save equal weights or the waiving of the question of weights. And an even start, and death at the end for the cock that is conquered. All this you had. There is nothing else.

"That this El Matador fights in a manner that is strange, as if the fiend himself had taught him, is true. I witnessed it myself. And never have I seen such fighting! It was wonder—maddening," the judge corrected himself hastily. "But against the method of fighting there is no provision."

"Then, *señor*," put in the owner of Don Pedro, who had been an interested listener, "I must withdraw my bird, Don Pedro. I ——"

Groans and cat-calls from the crowd drowned out his voice. They had just witnessed an unusual and therefore exciting fight, and were not in the mood to be cheated out of their sport.

"Coward! Quitter! Son of a pig!" These were the mildest epithets hurled at him.

He stood there in the pit, hesitant and unhappy, weighing his precious bird against his pride and loss of prestige among his neighbors. The bird won. He held up his hand for silence, and said:

"I withdraw Don Pedro from this fight, and therefore forfeit the entrance fee—half to the pit, half to the owner of the declared champion, this fiendish fowl here that has tricked El Capitan to an untimely end. There may be no rules against this form of fighting, but surely in some way we have been tricked!"

"No!" yelled a local sport from the shady side. "No! El Matador but fought as fights the skilled bull-fighter! El Capitan as an angry and foolish cock! All honor to El Matador! Let the fight go on!"

But the owner of Don Pedro was firm in spite of gibes and hisses. So the forfeit money was paid over to McDonald.

"Now, den!" yelled Big Un, prancing about the pit in a triumphant frenzy, holding El Matador aloft, "Iffen dere is any other *señor* here who wants to fight dis here lil' bird o' mine, let him fetch out his champion! I has got five hundred dollars dat says dat dere ain't nary bird in South America dat can lick him!"

The crowd did not understand the English, but they did the gestures.

"El Matador!" they shouted; "El Matador!"

Big Un's war-dance was interrupted by a belligerent yell from the entrance where a swarthy Mexican was struggling with the gate-keeper.

"He is mine! El Matador is mine! My beloved El Matador, that the *señor* of color holds aloft!" he shrieked. "Stolen from my home in the city of Mexico two months ago by my enemy who fled into Texas with my wife! To the wife he is welcome! But to my bird, not so! He is my heart's blood! My fortune!"

The crowd welcomed this diversion with a roar. Never before on a fiesta day had they received so much for their money.

Escaping from the clutches of the gate-keeper, the Mexican darted across the pit to Big Un, who had listened with open mouth, and reached up to seize El Matador.

"He is mine!" he yelled. "El Matador is mine! I, Antonio Lopez, will prove it!"

Big Un pushed him back with no gentle hand. And a push from the giant negro differed very little from the kick of a mule. Lopez, obeying the impulse, staggered back across the pit, and into the arms of the owner of the dead El Capitan.

"Hist!" said this citizen of Porto Cortez in a low tone. "Cease thy brawling! Go with me to the alcalde, after I have given El Capitan here to my mozo, that he may be given honorable burial," and he swallowed back a sob. "We will have this gringo of color thrown in prison, until such time as he can prove his claim to thy cock.

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I am Marcio Cortez, of the Hacienda Rosa. The alcalde is my friend."

IN THE meantime Big Un had been surrounded by the crew of the *Maggie May;* all happy and wealthy, and amid the mutual felicitations that followed, the Mexican who had claimed El Matador was forgotten. It was McDonald's idea that the man was drunk.

So, followed at a respectable distance by a thirsty and admiring crowd, who well knew the etiquette of such occasions, Big Un departed with El Matador in his wicker-work container tucked under his arms. He disappeared in the first door down the street toward the water-front, that displayed the sign—"*Aqua Mineral, Aqua Delienta.* Here we are! English spoken." The crowd that followed disappeared inside also. And, by the time Captain Daugherty, the mate and the collector of the port had come opposite, the sound of clinking glasses, laughter and many soft Spanish "Thank you, *señors*," floating out the door tempted them in likewise.

In a few moments the delighted proprietor was serving them the best French brandy and mineral waters at a special table set aside for such distinguished guests.

The crew at the general bar and tables, the captain, mate and collector of the port at their reserved table, made a night of it in which they were given hearty and enthusiastic assistance by the sporting fraternity of Porto Cortez. As they began before six P.M. by two A.M. they were going strong, when the mate, still sober enough to reason, advised a return to the *Maggie May.*

On the way to the water-front, Big Un ably assisted by the crew, regaled the few late street stragglers with that coastwise sailors' song—

"It takes a long slim gal to make a Bos'un lay his whistle down."

The crew, keeping step to this lively air, managed to reach the fruit-wharf in much better time than the captain and his two companions, who had lost their sense of direction but none of their dignity.

When they did reach the wharf they found Big Un in the clutches of two policemen, while McDonald was telling a fat pompous Spaniard, who proved to be no less a person than the alcalde, in Scotch, thinly disguised as Spanish that he would see him in a much more torrid climate than Porto Cortez before he would yield up El Matador to him. And for him and his friends together with the two policemen, to come on and take El Matador if they thought they were men enough.

Evidently the alcalde, and the two men standing beside him in the moonlight, did not think they were men enough for they made no move. And the policemen did not offer to assist them, but continued to clutch Big Un convulsively.

The alcalde turned to the mate with a sigh of relief, when he stepped forward and asked what the trouble was. Before the alcalde could recover his breath from the sigh the crew speaking one at a time, enlightened him.

"Mr. Shannon, suh, we was just walkin' along, singin' and fixin' to go on 'board the *Maggie May* when dese here cops and dem men jumped out from behind dat banana pile and grabbed me, an' tried to grab the rooster."

"Yes, sir," chimed in Slim the Portuguese when Big Un paused for breath, "the alcalde says these *señors* here claim our rooster, and that he is arresting Big Un for stealing him or for having stolen property in his——"

"An' he wants to send Big Un to jail till it's all settled!" interrupted Joe the cabin-boy.

"An' we ain't goin' to stand for it sir!" the cook added. "We are Americans an' our rooster is too, as far as we know, an' there ain't no two or three Spaniards or Mexicans or —— Chinamen can tell us what we have got to do!"

"Naw!" said McDonald, "there ain't! Come on, ye fat porpoise, an' let me put the map of Africay on your face!"

"Shut up!" yelled the distracted mate, in a voice that woke up the wharf night-watchman. "What do you think I am! Let these here other men get in a word!" He turned to the alcalde. "Now then, *señor*, what is the trouble?"

"*Señor*, with felicity I answer! Señor Cortez here is my very good friend—I eat many times at his house. I——"

"That's all right, *señor*, but what is wrong? What has my man done, to be arrested?"

"*Señor*, I will answer! Señor Cortez, who is my friend, he brings to me this man Antonio Lopez by name, a citizen of Mexico,

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who makes complaint. He says this cock here who to-day won so much money for this gringo of color, is his property. He——"

"Oh! *Señor!*" exclaimed Lopez coming forward. "This cock, El Matador, is not alone my property! He is my life! My soul! My family! My income!

"From a little chicken just out of the egg I raise him! I cover him in my bed at night to keep him warm! He eat from my plate! I train him day by day; week by week; month by month! I train him, oh, so slowly because he is not very smart, *señor*, having not much of brains.

"But at last, I teach him to fight as he has fought to-day! First, to step aside and strike from the side; next to run, to retreat. Next to lie down as if exhausted to fool the other cock. And then to strike upward quickly! To slay from below!

"*Señor*, it has taken much labor! But it has paid! Last month I win at the fiesta in Aguas Calientes much gold! From one man alone two thousand pesos! What then does he do? He steals my wife away and flees! To her he is welcome! But with them, *señor*, goes El Matador also! And I am desolate!"

Lopez, pausing to sob, gave the alcalde an opening. He pushed forward.

"And then, *señor*, he find not this man! In all of Mexico he is not! He comes to Porto Cortez in search of him, and here, by chance, by great good fortune he finds his beloved bird!

"*Señor*, we would arrest this gringo of color as a custodian of property that has been stolen. We would take charge of this most valuable fowl, to keep safely until such time as it is decided to whom he shall be given. We——"

"What does he say, Mr. Shannon?" asked Captain Daugherty, stepping between them on unsteady legs.

"Why, he says he is going to arrest Big Un and take our rooster away from us."

"Oh! is he!" said the captain belligerently. "Boys, do you hear that? This here justice of the peace says he is goin' to jug Big Un and swipe our rooster!"

"Not while we are alive, captain, sir," answered the cook, his usual mildness and love of peace drowned in seven glasses of French brandy. "Not while we are——"

"Shut up!" ordered the mate. "If you men will just keep quiet an' leave this to me I'll——"

"But I ain't goin' to leave it to you, Mr. Shannon!" said the captain, his natural stubbornness reinforced by alcohol. "An' sir, did I hear you say 'Shut up?' Was you speakin' to me?"

"Certainly not, sir!" answered the harried mate. "I was talkin' to the cook."

"That's better! Much better!" continued the captain with a lofty dignity that was fast making the mate regard murder with affectionate approval. "It will be a sad day for the sea, sir, when the mate of a vessel can tell the captain to shut up! A sad——"

"Better go wake up the collector of the port, over there," parried the mate, indicating a portly form dimly outlined on a pile of pineapples, from which a peaceful snore was emanating, "and get him to tell the alcalde who we are, so we can all get to bed and get a little sleep. We've got to finish loading and get out of here at noon. An' we can't spare Big Un. That's plain."

Thus admonished the captain staggered over to the pineapple pile and managed to arouse the brandy-mellowed collector by falling over him.

After the collector had rubbed his eyes, got upon his feet and beheld the alcalde, and had the situation explained to him, pure joy filled his soul. For three years he had waited for just such an opportunity as this.

The alcalde was his deadly political enemy. He had offended the official dignity of the collector of the port many times. Here was the chance to get even, for which he had craved.

"What have we here?" he asked, in the same sugary tones the alcalde had used when he had denied leniency to the collector's only son, convicted of certain shady transactions in the local lottery.

"It is my very good and honorable friend, the alcalde!" he exclaimed dramatically putting a fat hand over his heart. "What would you, *señor*, on my humble domain the fruit-wharves? Which belong to the National Government," he added significantly.

"I would arrest this gringo of color as a custodian of stolen property, *señor*. And also I seek to restore to Señor Antonio Lopez, who is a friend of Señor Cortez, his valuable game-cock, which has been stolen from him, and is now in the possession of these gringoes. And I ask your assistance and cooperation in the matter," he added

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as a polite afterthought, although these conciliatory words were gall and wormwood in his mouth.

The collector's resentment, ably assisted by the French brandy he had consumed, rose to the boiling-point. He stepped forward two steps with a tragic air. Nor did the slight alcoholic stagger in his gait detract from the dignity of the stride.

"What!" he exclaimed thickly. "Do these obscene reptiles of local police dare to trespass upon the wharves of the National Government—my wharves! And arrest without national warrant a peaceful citizen of a sister republic! Miscreants! Stupid pigs! Release this gringo of color!"

The two policemen hesitated and glanced at the alcalde. The alcalde contented himself with glaring fiercely at the policemen and saying nothing.

"Dost thou hear me?" stormed the collector of the port, who was thoroughly enjoying himself. "Stand but one moment longer with thy dirty hands upon this noble gringo of color, and I will bid my friend the captain to summon to his aid his nation's soldiers of the sea, who sleep on board the destroyer yonder!" And he waved a tragic hand toward a small oil-tanker anchored close in, and whose dim outlines showed grim and gray in the moonlight.

Without further hesitation the policemen chose the part of least resistance. They let go of Big Un, and stepped behind the alcalde.

Señor Cortez stepped forward and laid a restraining arm on the collector of the port.

"But, *señor*, what of my friend? What redress has he? While the alcalde and thyself quarrel over a question of jurisdiction, what will be done to protect his claim to this valuable cock? I have information from the watchman of the wharf that at noon of to-day this fruit-steamer sails north again. And unless something is done to prevent it, this cock sails with her, in keeping of the gringo of color."

"He shorely will!" called out Big Un who with El Matador again under his arm, stood in the midst of the *Maggie May's* crew.

"What assurance have we," resumed Cortez blandly, "that the gringo of color, or the valuable fowl claimed by my friend, will ever return to Porto Cortez?

"I appeal to you as a favor, from one who can also grant favors, that the alcalde be allowed to make this arrest, and to have the custody of the fowl."

Señor Cortez spoke with the assurance of the local politician accustomed to having his way, and under normal conditions the collector of the port would not have hesitated. But unfortunately French brandy is not politic, and his desire for revenge also outweighed his discretion. Señor Cortez no doubt had five hundred peon votes at his disposal, but until the administration changed the wharves were his.

The mate, quick to see the hesitation which alcohol and the desire for revenge had engendered in the collector's mind, drew him to one side.

"*Señor*, do not allow this arrest, we beg. This man is a necessity to us; we must have him to operate our boat. We can not wait until he can be tried. Our cargo of fruit, already half-loaded, will spoil. The damage will fall on your fruit plantation owners, as you know, if we can prove the delay not to be our fault. The small consignment you have placed with us privately," he added in a lower tone, "which we mean to sell for you, it too will spoil. The man will return with us on our next trip, and the captain here——"

The mate looked around. The captain had gone peacefully to sleep on the pine-apple pile lately occupied by the collector of the port.

"The captain, I am sure," he corrected himself hastily, "will verify all that I have said."

"It is enough!" exclaimed the collector of the port. "Say no more, *señor!*

"Señor Cortez, and *señor* the alcalde," and he turned to the others who had stood glowering at him during the secret conference, "I can not allow this infringement of International Law! This gringo of color, I am informed, is necessary to the operation of the boat. And for the boat to await the issue of trial by the alcalde's court will cause the cargo of fruit already loaded in the boat to spoil. Señor Shannon pledges his word that the gringo of color shall return and be ready for trial on the next trip."

"But El Matador! What of him?" wailed Lopez. "It is not the gringo of color that I desire! He is free to go! It is El Matador! My soul! My infant! My income!"

"Mr. Shannon, you know I bought dat

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chicken in Galveston. I bought him fair and square, borryin' de money from de cap'n. I kin prove it all!"

The mate translated.

"The cock El Matador goes with the gringo of color," decided the collector of the port, with alcoholic firmness.

And from this decision, neither abuse and protestations from the alcalde and Cortez, nor tears from Lopez could move him. Cortez and the alcalde departed in great indignation, with Lopez trailing sorrowfully in their wake. The captain was awakened, assisted by the crew and put to bed in his cabin, while the collector of the port and the mate sat on deck for an early morning cup of coffee.

THE alcalde and Cortez were so busy framing up a plan for revenge on the collector for the indignity he had heaped upon them that they forgot Lopez. They did not notice when he quietly slipped into a small restaurant, but went on their way.

A hot, spiced cup of chocolate, together with a hearty breakfast, and a couple of cigarets, helped Lopez to believe that while down he was not necessarily out. Deserted by his influential friends, he would now help himself.

After half an hour's communion with himself, he went out and bought a small water-gourd from a near-by dealer, filled it at the restaurant and returned to the fruit-wharf.

Confident that he would not be recognized by the crew of the *Maggie May*, with ordinary precaution, he drew his sombrero down over his head, wrapped his scarf well up about his neck and joined the group of dock stevedores who were waiting to resume the loading of the *Maggie May*.

The mate having finished his breakfast and said good-by to the collector of the port, ordered the hatchways opened. He did not bestow a glance on Lopez as he filed past him and disappeared in the hold with the "handers-down" together with those who were to receive the fruit from them and store it in the hold.

Lopez did not linger to do any of the work. While the others were arranging the loading among themselves, he disappeared in the darkness, sought out a comfortable hiding place behind the bananas and went to sleep.

The *Maggie May* was well out in the open sea, the blue waters of the Gulf surging past her nose, before Captain Daugherty sent Joe to the galley for his coffee. He had the events of the early morning explained to him by the mate, who tactfully referred to what had happened after the captain had succumbed to sleep on the pine-apple pile, with a preface of "after you came on board, sir."

"I have loaned that nigger lots of money, first and last," said the captain with a mighty yawn. "An' a lot of it I never got back. Never expected it. Just charged it off to profit and loss, because he can get more steam out of the *Maggie May* and do more odd jobs than any hand we ever had. But this is one time I'll say, he wiped the slate clean. How much did the crew clean up on that rooster-fight?"

"One thousand, even money; less what they spent treating the water-front bums and cock-pit rousters. How much did you win, sir?" asked the mate.

"I won, clean, six hundred dollars. How much for you, Mr. Shannon?"

"About the same, sir. But the best of all is the tip-off we gave the collector of the port! He is our friend for life. We can get away with anything short of murder as long as he is collector of the port. I think the old bird carried home two thousand pesos in his wallet. He just about sunk the alcalde and his sour-faced friend who had such an almighty grouch on because our rooster won. Well, I'm goin' back up on deck. Anything you want?"

"Yes, send Big Un down here if he's not busy."

"Cap'n, suh," began Big Un a few minutes later, "I ain't forgot dat two hundred dollars. Mr. Shannon locked all our money up in de safe fer safe-keepin', an' to bust up de crap-shootin' till we makes Galveston. When he gives me my share, I aims to bring dat two hundred right straight to you."

"It's not that, Big Un. I wanted to caution you about that rooster. It seems he is a very valuable bird."

"Yes, suh! He shorely is all of dat!" said Big Un fervently. "Just look whut he has already done for us all! Dat rooster, he's just de same as a oil-well, an' lots more entertainin.' "

"What we must do," continued the captain amiably as he thought of the substantial addition he would be able to make to

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his account at the Seamen's Bank in Galveston, "is to guard that rooster and keep him safe. Feed him carefully and not let him catch any disease. An' then, a valuable bird like that is liable to be stolen."

"Cap'n, I aims to sleep wid dat chicken!" said Big Un earnestly. "Iffen anybody gits dat bird away from me, he will have to step right over my dead body to git him. Dat's all!"

"But what do you know about chickens—feeding them and so on?"

"Cap'n, kin a duck swim? I was born an' raised on a farm. I knows chickens frum Genesis to Revelations. Dat rooster's own mammy wouldn't know any better how to take care of him dan what I does!"

"I believe you," said the captain, convinced. "Now go on back to your work."

LOPEZ alternately slept and ate half-ripe bananas until he knew from the sounds on deck and what came to him through the boat's sides, that the *Maggie May* had made port.

The hatchways were opened after a time and the unloading began. Lopez peered out carefully from behind his pile of bananas until he ascertained the character and complexion of the Galveston wharf-hands. Luck was with him. These proved to be a mixed collection of colored boys and Mexicans.

He mingled with these in the semi-darkness of the hold and helped unload. At the noon hour he was rewarded for the first hard work he had ever done by glimpsing his beloved El Matador.

Big Un, unable to resist the temptation, was exhibiting the rooster to a selected, and admiring group of Galveston's local sports, colored and otherwise. The desire to rush into this group, draw his stiletto and claim his beloved bird, who had won for him many days of ease, was almost overwhelming. But he had to content himself with standing on the outside of the circle, with his mouth watering.

In a few minutes this group was broken up at the earnest and profane request of the mate. Big Un put El Matador in his improvised coop in the galley, under the watchful eye of the cook, and returned to the engine-room.

"Big Un," greeted McDonald, who was washing up to go ashore, "I want you to cool these here boilers down as quick as you can, and get ready to wash out. The boiler inspector is coming to-morrow. You had better not go ashore."

"Yes, suh," said Big Un. "I aimed to——"

"Yes, I know," replied McDonald, "you aimed to clean up on nigger-town with that rooster this afternoon, and I don't blame you. But we've got to clean the old girl's guts out for that inspector. Don't you want me to take El Matador home with me? I've got a swell chicken-house out at my place."

"No, suh; I can't say as I does. I aims to keep dat rooster close to my warm side. I'se skeered somethin' might happen to him. Me an' Cookie will take good care of him."

Big Un had hardly disappeared down the engine-room ladder when the cook was delighted by a humble, whining voice at the door of the galley.

"*Señor, el capitan* has said if there be extra cleaning to be done, I shall receive the wages therefor."

"Oh! did he?" asked the delighted cook in English. "Sometimes the old man acts almost human an' kind. Maybe he wants a cake baked to take home. Come on in here—" he reverted to Texas Spanish—"and scrub up these here pans. An' then mop up the floor."

Half an hour later Big Un was startled by a shriek from the cook at the engine-room ladder. "Git a move on you, Big Un! El Matador is bein' stole!"

Big Un reached the deck in double-quick time to hear the youthful falsetto of Joe, the cabin-boy, crying:

"I've got him! Come and help me!"

As Big Un dashed toward the gang-plank he collided with the captain, who had rushed out of the chart-room, but he didn't stop to apologize. On the wharf was Joe, struggling with a Mexican who held aloft the fluttering form of El Matador, who was squawking hoarsely.

Before Big Un reached them the Mexican squirmed free and turned to run. The resourceful Joe stooped, grabbed him by the feet as he turned, and the man fell heavily. El Matador, released by the fall, gave an excited flutter over the wharf and into the water.

Big Un changed his course, but not his speed, and was in the water almost as soon as El Matador. He seized the bedraggled

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chicken and swam to a small boat tied to a nearby piling.

"Hold him, boys, till I gits there!" he yelled. "I aims to bust dat man wide open! I aims——"

"Shut up!" Captain Daugherty's red and excited face looked down at him. "What you aim to do is to turn this rooster over to me for safe-keeping. He may catch cold now and die from this wetting. Suppose he had drowned? You ain't goin' to do a thing to that Mexican. He's gone anyhow. Here! Hand me up that rooster an' swim over to the *Maggie May* and climb up. The cook will throw you a rope."

"Yes, sir!" began the excited cook, as Big Un came over the side. "I went down in the cabin to git the captain's breakfast tray that triflin' Joe had left down there, so I could wash the dishes. An' when I come up I seen that Mexican sneakin' along toward the gang-plank. 'Hey!' I says, 'come back here! You ain't washed all them pans.' I seen he was holdin' his hands in front of him—an' then Joe——"

"An' just then I came out of the wash-house an' I seen he had our rooster——"

"Our rooster!" exclaimed Big Un. "Our rooster! Where do you git that stuff, Joe? It's my rooster!"

"But you haven't paid for him!" said the captain grimly as he handed El Matador to the cook, who dried his feathers tenderly and returned him to the coop. "Suppose that Mexican had got away with him? He would be in a chili stew by this time, an' you'd be out two hundred dollars.

"Cap'n, suh," asked Big Un, diplomatically changing the subject, "does you reckon dat was dat same Mexican dat claimed our rooster at Porto Cortez?"

"How could it be?" the captain replied scornfully. "There ain't no air-ships flyin' between here an' Porto Cortez."

"But captain, I believe it was him!" exclaimed Joe. "Come to think of it, he had the same sort of scar on his face. An' he—maybe he stowed away in the *Maggie May*."

"Where?" asked the captain angrily. "You couldn't no more get one of them Mexicans down in the hold of a fruit-ship with the hatches closed, than you could fly! They're too afraid of tarantulas. Didn't you get a week's dish-washin' last trip for sneakin' down in the hold while they was loadin', and yellin' 'Spider!' No, that Mexican was just one of them wharf-rats who wanted a chicken stew.

"An' now, Big Un," added the captain, "I'm goin' home an' I'm goin' to take this here rooster with me! You have showed plain that you can't be trusted with him."

"But cap'n, suh," began Big Un desperately, "I aimed to fight him to-morrer at de colored park, where we has a pit, sorter hid-like from de cops. I had done arranged fur it.

"An' Mr. Shannon, suh," he turned to the mate who had just come up, "please pay de cap'n two hundred dollars out of what I has in de safe."

"No, Big Un," said the captain, magnaminously. "You keep the two hundred dollars until I return the rooster. I don't know, Mr. Shannon, but what you hadn't better add three hundred of my money to it—five hundred in all—as a sort of security to Big Un. This rooster is too valuable, Big Un, to risk at any colored park fight in Galveston. Suppose the cops raided you and took El Matador?"

Big Un saw the good sense in what the captain said. El Matador was too valuable to risk where the fight might be raided. But he was sure no white man could care for and guard a chicken as he could. He was also aware of the uselessness of opposing Captain Daugherty. So he said no more. He contented himself by going below and furiously wiping the engines, as a relief for his feelings.

The captain, when he was ready to go ashore, sent for Big Un.

"Here, Big Un; take this two dollars, go down Strand and buy me two or three chickens, fryers, and put 'em in the coop with El Matador. You see," noticing the puzzled look on Big Un's face, "my wife—well, she is very religious. She thinks gamblin' or—fightin' chickens is—well, if she thought I had ever gone to a cock-fight she'd think I had busted all the Ten Commandments. So I aim to take El Matador along with them fryers an' then she won't think anything like she would if I took him out home by himself."

Big Un said earnestly:

"You had better let me take dat rooster! My wife she is a shoutin' member of de church, too, but I has done talked dat woman into believin' dat de twelve apostols used to fight roosters when dey wasn't busy preachin'. An' I proved it to her by dat

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cock dat crowed when de cops had Peter in de station-house. Better let me take dat rooster."

What the captain said would be censored. So Big Un went after the fryers, placed them in with El Matador and loaded the coop in the fruit company's Ford that was waiting to take the captain home.

After the captain's departure Big Un, the cook and Joe repaired to a chilli and tamale stand that was near the wharf and regaled themselves with chilli, while they expressed themselves regarding the captain's action.

"Our rooster!" sneered the cook. "Did you hear the Old Man? Our rooster! Didn't you buy him, Big Un, off that Mexican at Mexican Joe's? How does the Old Man get that way?"

"I allowed dat I did buy him at first," replied Big Un, with his mouth full. "But after de Old Man got through talkin' to me, it seems like he done it all. Anyhow, he did let me have dat two hundred dollars," he added loyally. "Othahwise I couldn't noways have bought dat rooster. You know us boys didn't have but one hundred dollars all told. An' de mate, he wouldn't loan his own brother de money to buy his self a coffin!"

"But Big Un," asked Joe, who yearned to see El Matador in action again, "how about that colored park fight to-morrow, an' El Matador out at the captain's house?"

"I must say," answered Big Un, whose full stomach was turning him into a philosopher, "dat de Old Man is dead right about dat colored park fight! 'Twon't no ways do! Galveston cops is dead ag'in rooster fights. Suppose dey was to raid de fight an' swipe El Matador? Where would we be den? No suh! We mus' just wait till we gits back to one of dem fruit ports, an' den!—Oh, boy! Just watch El Matador's smoke! I guess after all, dat rooster is safest out at de cap'n's house."

"Of what did the gringos of the sea talk?" asked Lopez of the chilli merchant after Big Un and the two others had departed.

He had returned secretly to the wharf, and sought refuge, for a consideration, with the keeper of the chilli stand.

The chilli vendor translated as nearly as he was able.

"And El Capitan, where does he dwell?" asked Lopez.

The other shrugged his shoulders with the indifferent, irritating gesture of the Mexican.

"Who knows? Go thou and ask at the office of the fruit company."

Possessed of the information, Lopez that night attempted to spy out the land by an investigation of the captain's back yard, where his chicken-house was located, and where he hoped El Matador was also to be found.

With one foot over the fence, he was stopped by a large Airedale, whose function was to guard the household in the captain's absence. Like a true Scot, the Airedale's words were few, but expressive. Lopez retired, baffled but not defeated.

"Captain," asked his wife next morning after she had followed him out to the chicken-yard and viewed El Matador's ungainly proportions with disfavor, "where in the world did you get this awful-looking rooster?"

"Don't know. Guess he got mixed up with the fryers," answered the captain vaguely.

"He looks like a pit game to me," she said.

"Oh! no, Lucy! Nothing of the kind! He must be a new kind of leghorn. I aim to fatten him up a bit, and then put him with the other chickens. Sort of experiment with him. Don't you bother with him." And he hastily changed the subject.

He returned at noon from a game of chess with an old friend across the street. His wife met him at the door and her face betokened trouble.

"Captain, do you know what your new kind of leghorn rooster has done?" She didn't wait for him to reply. "Why, he has killed two of my nicest young roosters, that I paid five dollars each for! That's what he's done! They are out there in the yard, dead! Go look for yourself. I told you that rooster was a game! Now I know it! You've got to get rid of him! Go out there this instant and lock him up! The cruel, ugly thing!"

"But Lucy——"

"Don't Lucy me. That chicken can't stay on this place!"

"But maybe if I shut him up," put in the captain desperately. "He——"

"Well, go and shut him up before he kills the rest of the chickens! New kind of leghorn indeed! Captain, I verily believe you bought that rooster on purpose! Mrs. Brown told me this morning her husband

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had gone wild over game chickens. She can't get a word out of him any more. He spends all his spare time out in the chicken-yard making those cruel things kill each other. Oh! Men are just naturally brutes at heart! all of them! I——"

But the captain was gone.

El Matador, heedless of the ruin he had wrought, was placidly feeding among the admiring and servile hens. The sole surviving rooster, being brave but not foolhardy, had fled to the barn. El Matador came running to him, when he called, in the ungainly lope he affected, and the captain shut him in the coop with a sigh. Then he had an inspiration. To-morrow he would be sailing. He would lay a plan now for taking El Matador with him.

"Lucy!" he called. "Lucy! Maybe I can sell this chicken to Brown or somebody. If you are sure he's a game." His wife looked at him pityingly from the back door which she had opened when he called.

"The only way you can ever sell that rooster, is to put him in with some fryers, like the poultryman did you!"

Captain Daugherty smiled to himself.

THE captain descended from the fruit company's Ford that evening and walked in his yard at peace with the world. To-morrow at noon he would set sail for the fruit ports again, and he had evolved a scheme to get El Matador safely aboard the *Maggie May*. Big Un was to call in half an hour and say he would purchase the rooster for ten dollars. This money the captain would hand over to his wife to purchase other roosters in the place of those sent to untimely graves by El Matador, and peace would be restored.

He paused with hand on the door knob, arrested by the happy voices of his wife and his two marriageable daughters, blended with a mellow male basso. The captain gritted his teeth and shook an impotent fist in the direction of the voice. The minister, young and unmarried, was being entertained at dinner! They hadn't even waited for him!

He opened the door, to be greeted by an appetizing odor of fricasseed chicken.

"Come on to dinner, honey," his wife greeted him. "Brother Hawkins was in a hurry as it's prayer-meeting night, so we didn't wait."

"And we've got just what you like for supper, daddy," added his youngest daughter; "fricasseed capons!"

The captain's anger cooled as the capons were consumed and when the girls went out with the minister to prayer-meeting, he said with a smile:

"Well, Lucy, I've sold that rooster! A colored man will be here for him now in a few minutes."

A blank look of surprize came over her face.

"Why, honey, he has already come for him; only it wasn't a colored man. He was a Mexican."

"A Mexican! I didn't send no Mexican!"

"Yes, you did! Or he said you did! He couldn't say but a few words in English, so I got Mrs. Brown's cook to talk to him. He said you sent him after the rooster; said his name was Lopez—and that you——"

"Lopez?" said the captain. "Lopez!"

He got up abruptly from his chair muttering to himself.

"And he left those two capons we had for supper—said you sent them; had traded the rooster for them. Why, what's the matter? I thought it was a good trade."

The captain did not reply. He half-staggered into the bed-room, making queer stuttering sounds. He reached out a trembling hand for the decanter that occupied the place of honor in the medicine cabinet. As he did so he became aware of his wife's parrot, presented to her by his mate, following a certain exciting episode at Tampico.

The parrot sat with his head held down, waiting for the captain to scratch it, as was his habit. But instead of the usual head scratching the captain gave his tail a vicious yank. The parrot, clawing wildly at his perch for equilibrium, burst out in a stream of Spanish profanity that would have caused the moldering bones of the fiercest pirates of the Spanish Main to rattle in Davy Jones' locker.

"Captain! What on earth are you doing to that poor bird?" shrieked his wife from the kitchen.

"Nothin'! Not a thing!" called the captain thickly. "He's helpin' me; that's all."

"Helpin' you? What do you mean?"

"I'm gettin' him to say somethin' for me I'd like to say but can't!"

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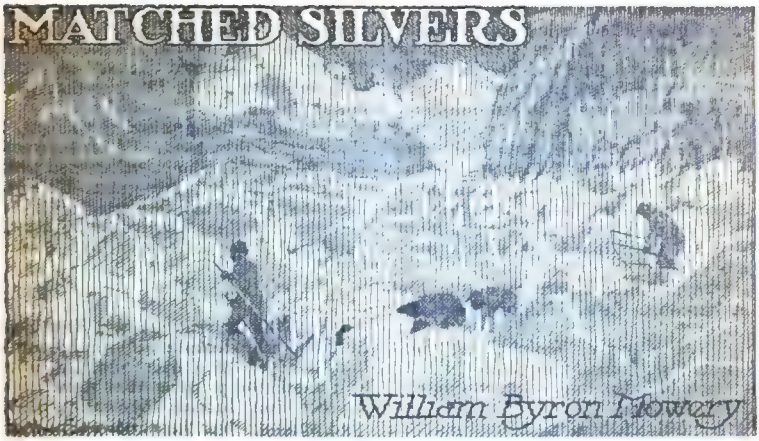
MATCHED SILVERS



DICK KENT left the frozen bed of the river he had been following, and took up a path that led over a pink granite swell. Behind this, in a snug basin covered with tall spruce, was his split-log trapping shack.

Fresh komatik tracks led down the slope to the cabin. Kent guessed that "Jay-Bird" Willett, who carried the mail once a month between Okkak and Fort Chimo, had cut off the straight trail to stay with him that night.

A team of tired huskies was lying on the snow near the door. Kent cracked his whip over his pups to keep them from starting a general mix-up with the visitors. A sturdy, middle-aged, genial man appeared at the door, a sizzling frying-pan in his hand.

"Welcome to our home, Kent," Willett said with a grin. "I got supper ready for you."

"Hello there, Jay-Bird! Darned glad to hear it. I didn't stop for mug-up on t' fur-path today. Could eat a grizzly."

"How's trappin'?"

"What t' news at t' Tickle?"

Willett laughed.

"You want to swap spiels, eh? Let's try my bannocks an' bear collops first. Holy Moses! That a patch fox you got there?"

"Yes, t' first one I caught this blessed Winter. T' fox all seem to be reds an' grays this season. Pretty rotten luck all around t' board."

Willett wielded a wicked frying-pan, to judge by the speed with which the bannocks and collops disappeared. They had finished their tin cups of coffee down to the last golden dregs—golden because of the luxury of cow in tablet form—before Willett got up and sorted a letter out of his slender pack.

"This for you, Kent. I thought it would spoil your appetite if I gave it to you afore supper. I'll throw namaycush to t' pups whiles you read it. You might want to kiss it, or something."

With a malicious grin, Willett passed the letter over with a flourish and went to the door. Kent looked at the Halifax post-mark, and the address:

Richard C. Kent

Okkak, Labrador

Or Wherever He May Be Found.

When the door closed behind the mail driver, he tore the envelope open and read. The last paragraph brought a wrinkle of anxiety to his forehead:

Dick, you must catch that fifteen hundred dollars in furs this Winter, for we don't want to put off The Date another Winter do we? And Old Joe swears up and down he is going to sell the boat this Spring. It's a gift at the price, for the river trade has picked up wonderfully since you left.

Followed some intimate words and a girl's nickname. When Willett came back

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in, Kent was staring at the string of marten, fox and mink pelts hanging from the rafters of his shack. At Rigolette prices it was worth not more than five hundred. The season was two-thirds gone, and shortly the fur would begin to get thin and scraggly.

'Jay-Bird," he confided, "atween now an' t' thaw, I've got to make a thousand dollars to buy a boat. I never seen such luck as I've had this season. Ruth says t' old fellow won't wait much longer to sell his boat. We was plannin' to be married comin' June if I could buy it. How'm I gonna turn t' trick?"

"Easy," Willett replied, so quickly that he surprised Kent. "Catch 'Big Bill' Carson."

"Big Bill Carson? Who's he? Why must I catch 'im? I never knowed anythink but a black fox that was worth a thousand dollars to catch."

"Big Bill is foxy all right, but he ain't a fox. Look here, Kent.

"Willett reached inside his jacket and produced a handbill.

"Read that."

Kent whistled as he read the account of Bill Carson burning down Berger's factory store at Okkak and nearly killing Dunk himself. In the lower right-hand corner was a crude, strong picture of a big-boned, tall, swarthy "liveyere."* Beneath the picture was the offer of a thousand dollars reward for his capture.

"This Big Bill," Willett explained, "was a liveyere from up toward Hebron. He put Berger in t' Mission hospital with a couple bullets in his ribs, an' burned t' store clean out. They say he was lickered up when he did it. Berger is plunkin' down t' kopecks hisself. So there's your little old thousand, Kent."

"My traps wouldn't hold a man of his size, Jay-Bird," Kent said casually. "Anyway, I don't reckon he's goin' to walk into any of them."

"You don't know, Kent," Willett rejoined. "I've been on t' lookout for 'im since I left Okkak. He knows better'n to show up anywheres along t' coast. He'll probably break west toward t' Bay. More'n likely he'll come up t' Ilinipi to get into t' Lake Manuan country. He can't go fast without a komatik. Better keep your eye peeled for 'im. He's got a caribou gun an' lots of stuff to go with it. He might shoot you if he wants your outfit."

"I wish he'd try it," Kent snorted. "I need that thousand darned bad. If I come across his trail, I'll take that gent back to Okkak."

"I wouldn't be surprised if you got t' chance to *try* that, Kent. I'd bet ten cents he'll follow this Ilinipi valley sou'west. But don't think he's easy game. He's got a lot at stake, an' he's desp'rate."

"So'm I," Kent observed. "So'm I, Jay-Bird."

*One who lives in a locality the year around: from "live lure."

II

FOR the next five days Kent kept a sharp lookout. He was not much afraid of Carson creeping upon him unexpectedly, either after night or in the day time, because the huskies would give warning; but there was a chance of his finding the cabin while no one was there, and looting it.

Instead of sleeping every other night in the little lean-to at the far end of his fur path, Kent hurried back to his main cabin those first five days. It was in an exposed place. He reasoned that Carson would travel along the smooth frozen Ilinipi bed, because the heavy snow, piled over the top of the deer bush, made traveling across the swells slow and dangerous.

On the sixth day after Willett had gone on, Kent was delayed on his fur path by having to make some fox beds. He got to the lean-to just a little before dusk. It was spitting snow and blowing a gale down from Chidley. The frozen particles stung like shot and the air was raw. He decided not to go back to his cabin that night. He believed Carson had taken some other route inland to the Manuan Lake region.

As he was flensing a little marten, his only catch of the round, he heard a dull report from the direction of a small muskeg lake up the Ilinipi. He straightened up and listened. The sound seemed a bit too dull for a rifle crack; it sounded more like snow letting loose along a hillside. He went on with the skinning.

Came a second crack. That time Kent knew it was a rifle. His kiliutok dropped in the snow. He spoke sharply to his pups to keep them from barking, and tied them inside the lean-to, with the exception of the lead dog, Halifax.

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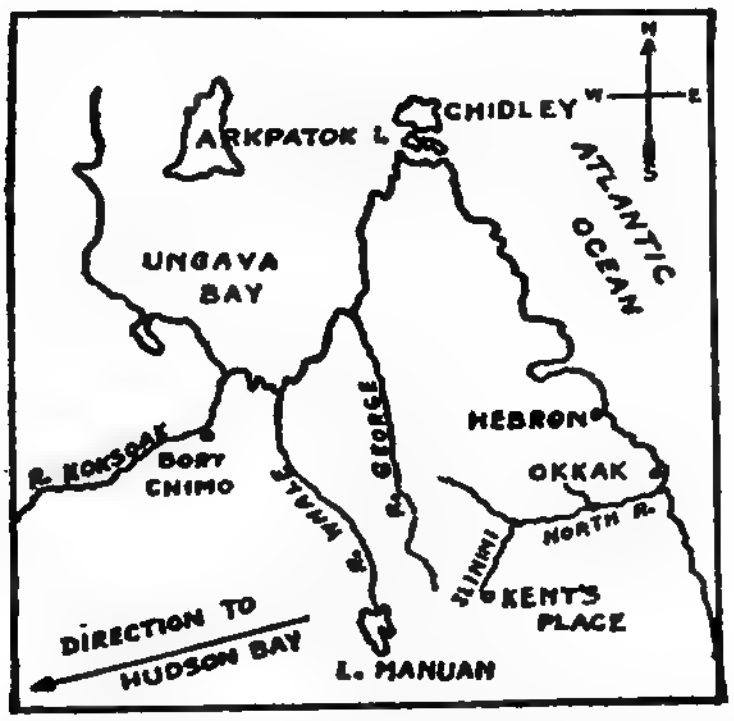

Grabbing his rifle and buckling on his racquets, he plunged into the thicket of tall aspens. Halifax crept along at his heels.

A mile up the bottom, he caught sight of a fire flickering in a clump of river spruce. Cautioning the lead dog, he made a wide circle to get a swell between himself and the fire. When he finally crawled up to the top of the swell, the fire was not more than fifty feet below him, at the foot of a tiny bluff which broke the wind.

A big man in sealskin clothes and white fox capote was crouched over the flame, broiling a hunk of meat. At the edge of the circle of firelight lay a dark object which Kent made out to be a small caribou which the stranger had shot.

As the man raised his head, the red light shone full on his face. Kent started. A long, thin nose, shaggy eyebrows, big grinning mouth, half-hid under a black spade beard—it gee-ed to a frazzle with the handbill.

At a sign from Kent, Halifax "froze" in his tracks. The trapper slid forward in the fluffy snow, with his eyes glued on the heavy caribou rifle standing against a tree within the man's reach.

When he was less than twenty-five feet away, Kent raised up to a kneeling posture behind a spruce. Purposely he cracked a stick. The big man swung around in his direction and reached for his gun.

"Jack 'em up!" Kent snapped, clicking his rifle. "Up high! Drop that gun. One—two——"

The man let go of the rifle and slowly raised his arms above his head. With his cheek against his rifle-stock Kent strode up to the fire. The big man—he was six feet six and broad as an ox—glared at him from under shaggy brows. Kent was no little fellow himself, but this liveyere towered half a head over him.

He realized that moment that Willett's warning was not idle. It was a dangerous game to meddle with this big fellow. He would have to watch him every second till he got him out to Okkak. But still he felt he was more than a match for the liveyere.

"Been expectin' you to come through this way, Carson," Kent remarked. "Been waitin' a week for you."

"What do ye want with me?" Carson barked. "I ain't bothered ye, have I?"

"No, but you're goin' to t' Post with me. T' less trouble you make, t' better. Don't get stubborn an' don't try any tricks. T' reward says dead or alive, an' it all depends on you which it'll be."

With his rifle on his hip, Kent brought his tump strap out of his jacket pocket, made a harness H knot in one end, and laid the line on the snow.

"Stick your hand through that," he ordered.

Carson sullenly stooped down and obeyed. Kent closed the knot, then stepped up and wound the line around the liveyere's wrists.

III

WITH Carson securely tied up, Kent started back to the lean-to. It took them a full hour to get there, because the big liveyere had no racquets and floundered heavily in the drifts. Kent wondered how the man ever had fought his way through the desolate frozen uplands for one hundred and fifty miles. His caribou hide boots were cracked so badly that they let the snow through. His fur clothes were cut and badly worn.

At the lean-to Kent cooked a meal of 'lassy seal-bun and bruise. He untied the big fellow's hands and guarded him closely while he ate. The man was ravenously hungry; he cleaned up the food which Kent had cooked for both of them; and drank two tin cups of black coffee.

On his face was the unmistakable look of a hunted man with a reward over his head. Big and strong as he was, he evidently was near the end of his string, from exhaustion. Kent knew he never could have made it across the savage uplands to

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the Bay, without dogs, a sled, and something of an outfit. Somewhere in the subarctic interior he would have dropped, and died.

While Carson rested, Kent restrung a pair of racquet frames. The wind had whipped the clouds away. Under the flash and play of the borealis, they started for the main cabin. It was easy traveling down the smooth bed of the frozen stream. They made quick time. At the cabin the liveyere asked for food again. Kent cooked him another big meal. Then, securely trussed up, Carson lay down on the bunk and was asleep instantly.

While he slept, Kent figured out a scheme of getting him safe to the coast. He planned to leave the heavy caribou rifle at the cabin but to travel with his own rifle unslung and ready. Besides, he put a belt gun in his jacket pocket. Of that, Carson would know nothing. If he started anything at close quarters, he would get a surprise.

The next morning the sky was a clear pale blue; the whipping wind had laid, but the temperature had dropped thirty degrees. The still cold was more terrible than the blustering gale. Sixty-odd degrees below zero it was—the coldest day Kent had ever known. The Pais d'en Haut was a frozen still expanse, all life crushed out of it by ninety-odd degrees of frost.

Nevertheless Kent dug the huskies out of their warm burrows in the drift behind the cabin, and got ready to start for the coast. With the giant liveyere in his custody he felt uneasy, or he might have waited. The man was desperate; he would not let himself be dragged back if he could get the upper hand for just one second. Kent watched him every instant.

Instead of taking the long komatik trail down the Roc Rouge then up the coast to Okkak, Kent decided to head straight across the granite swells for the spur of high coastal hills. When they left the cabin, he ordered Carson to go ahead and break the trail for the huskies, while he came along behind, giving directions and watching out for trickery.

Carson set a slow pace. He was headed for twenty years at least, or the noose if Berger died. Kent, alert and suspicious, could fairly see the big fellow's mind turning over schemes to escape.

It was humanely impossible to keep the liveyere's hands tied. They had to keep pulling their hands from their heavy gloves and passing them over their features not covered by their dickeyhoods, because in that fierce crackling cold a cheek or nose or chin could freeze without them even knowing it.

Once, after mug-up at noon, when they came across a big snow slide that blocked the little gorge they were traveling through, Carson turned around to come back. Kent saw him pretend to stumble, and pick up an ice-covered rock at the edge of the slide. He knew the man intended to hit him with it when he stepped by to get in the lead again.

"Drop that darnick, you!" Kent rasped.

Carson tossed it aside with a scowl.

"T' next time you try that, I'll hog-tie your hands an' let your face freeze off," Kent warned. "Now, step out a little. You're slow-pokin' on purpose. T'won't do you any good. Step on it!"

Carson tried no more tricks. In Kent he had met his match and knew it. When they camped that night in the shelter of a bluff, he submitted quietly to having his hands tied behind him. Kent helped him into his blankets and sat by the spruce fire smoking.

IV

BY THREE o'clock the next afternoon they had reached the high coastal hills and were winding through a pass. Bare gneiss bluffs of Laurentian rock here and there showed where the snow had slid off the steep slopes, and swept deer bush, boulders and soil into the ravines. Kent kept his eyes open for slipping snow. He had known times when a rifle shot or a loud sound on the frost-laden air had started a dry avalanche.

The worst of the trip through the deer bush was over. They would be through the spur by noon the next day, and from there to the coast was but thirty miles down a frozen river bed.

Carson evidently had made up his mind that he was doomed to go back, and had submitted to his fate. The thousand dollars were looming nearer and nearer to Kent with every mile they put behind them. A round thousand dollars—it was more than he could make with his usual luck in three winters' trapping—for five days work! It was incredible. Such luck seemed beyond him.

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But there was Big Bill Carson trudging along ahead of him and in his pocket was the handbill with the offer of reward in bold-face eighteen-point type. He could turn the liveyere over to the law, go back and get his fur, and be down at Rigolette before the thaw came! Halifax in two months, with the fifteen hundred dollars in his pocket!

But——

They were passing between two steep slopes through a narrow chute which in summer time was a stretch of small rapids. Bill Bill was fifty yards ahead, at the top of the chute, stepping along at a good pace. The komatik was just behind him. Kent had fallen back to watch the steep slope at his right. They needed meat for supper, and he had caught sight of a caribou dodging into a larch thicket near the top of the slope.

One of the younger dogs winded the animal and yelped. The excited team, jumping over each other and bucking, started to tangle their harness. The caribou, a big bull in velvet, streaked out of the thicket and tried to get over the steep brow of the swell. He floundered in a drift. Kent cut down on him. The bull plunged backward down the slope.

The crack of the rifle *seemed to be echoed* up along the almost perpendicular hill. Kent, watching the caribou coughing and trying to get up, did not hear the warning or Carson's shout.

The slope appeared to rise and spring at him like a huge Eocene monster. The caribou was caught up and swept along on the crest of the slide like a leaf on a mill stream. The silky, swishing hiss swelled into a roar. Rocks, small boulders, uprooted saplings, tons of snow packed hard as ice, and a whirling drift of blinding snow-spume literally jumped at him.

He turned to flee up the other slope, but a slate ledge fifteen feet high stared him stark in the face. He whirled again to flee up toward the komatik at the head of the chute; but above the road of the avalanche he heard Carson's voice booming hoarsely:

"Down t' chute, down t' chute, down t' chute! Like——!"

With terror clutching him, Kent threw away his rifle and leaped down the gorge. The edge of the slide, mostly cut off by a great granite boulder sticking out of the hill, caught him, swept him off his feet, whirled him head over heels, and tossed him against the opposite slope with a sickening impact.

It was several minutes before he could raise his head. The whole gorge was buried beneath thousands of tons of ice-hard snow, match-stick timber and rock. The avalanche had climbed up the opposite slope yards above the slate ledge.

He was bleeding profusely at the nose and mouth when Carson appeared, climbing around the edge of the drift. Carson pulled him out of the bank and propped him against a tree.

Kent looked again at the trap. The spot where he stood when he shot the caribou was buried beneath thirty feet of debris. Clear up the chute to the high spot where the komatik and team were, the gorge was jammed.

"I seen t' boulder was yer only chanct," Carson said. "Any bones broke?"

Kent shook his head and held up his hand for Carson to be still. The breath was knocked out of him. The words hammered on his ear drums like pile drivers.

Carson looked at him quizzically, then went after the komatik. When he got back with it, Kent was on his feet, flexing his arms and legs. His nose and mouth had stopped bleeding, but he felt groggy.

There was a minute's awkward silence. Carson leaned against a sapling, with a grin on his bronzed face.

"Guess I'll boss t' party now, mister," he said.

"I needed t' thousand darned bad," Kent spoke up, spitting out a clot of blood and looking straight into Big Bill Carson's eyes. "But I can get along without it. That komatik is pointed west. Just keep 'er pointed that way. We're goin' back where we started from."

Big Bill sneered.

"Yea, because yer rifle's buried in t' slide an' ye're shaky on yer pins."

He towered over Kent, laughing hoarsely.

"Ye lie," Kent snapped, stepping back. "You're a liar, Bill Carson!"

He whipped the belt gun out of his jacket.

"Take a look at that. I guess you haven't got me under your thumb. I could bore you six times afore you could budge. I guess you don't boss this party. We're goin' back *because I say so!*"

Carson stared into the muzzle of the belt gun and swallowed hard. His slow wits hadn't got it straight.

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"Ye're goin' back? What for?"

"Why did you yell for me to run *down* t' chute?"

"Well, I dono. Jest natural, I guess, to save yer hide. Ye wuz sure a goner. I couldn't keep still an' see it swallow ye up."

"No, you couldn't, an' I'd be a sneakin' carcajou to take ye in to t' Post. It 'ud be blood money. We're goin' back to t' cabin, but I boss t' party. Understand?"

The words went in Carson's ear and came out at his mouth in the shape of a wide grin. He reached out a hand as big as a ham.

"All right, buddy," he said slowly, "ye're t' boss o' t' party."

V

ON HIS return trip from Fort Chimo, Jay-Bird Willett reached Kent's cabin one evening just at dusk. Over their pipes after supper, Willett broached the subject.

"Seen anything of Big Bill, Kent?"

Kent shook his head slightly.

Willett took his pipe from his mouth.

"Well, I did!"

Kent jumped. Willett, seeing him in suspense, took his own time.

"I wuz comin' along through t' Whale River country about four days back. Met a komatik trail so fresh I followed it a little ways. Ran plump onto 'im campin' under a boulder. He had a sled an' five pups an' a good outfit that he must have stole somewhere."

"Didn't you try to get 'im?" Kent asked, trying hard to appear surprized.

Willett leaned forward.

"Atween me, yourself, an' Halifax there, Kent, I didn't. Furthermore than that, I was supposed to spread t' news about 'im at t' Fort for them to spread it on around t' Bay coast, but I didn't. He'll get away sure, havin' that team an' t' outfit, an' with t' Bay Coast not knowin' about 'im."

"You changed your mind about 'im, then? Kent queried.

"No, I didn't," Willett rejoined with some heat. "Mr. Alonzo Berger deserved about what he got. I thought that right along, and I ain't t' only one as thought so. He had this Big Bill Carson an' lots more liveyeres like 'im on his books. Had a hold on 'em they couldn't break. They had to sell 'im their pelts Spring in an' Spring out an' take what he'd give 'em. He offered Carson a hundred dollars on credit for a pair of matched silvers. I seen 'em myself. They was beauts. Worth a thousand dollars if a penny."

At mention of the silvers, Kent looked interested.

"Go on," he encouraged.

"When Carson got sore, Berger threatened to use t' law on 'im if he sold t' silvers anywhere else. They had a fracas an' Berger got a couple bullets in his ribs. Didn't hurt 'im much, I guess. What's he sore about is that this Big Bill burned his store down an' burned up all his records, so that t' other liveyeres are scot-free."

Kent nodded.

"That about gee-es with what Big Bill told me," he said casually, relighting his pipe with a spruce needle.

Willett leaped off his seat, wide-eyed.

"Big Bill told you! What d'you mean?" He gulped with astonishment. "You spoofin' me, you tow-headed whelp?"

"Set down an' don't throw a fit or I won't tell you," Kent commanded. "Big Bill called on me just after you left. I traded 'im my pups, except Halifax, an' t' komatik an' part of t' grub for them matched silvers an' some other pelts that he's got cached back near t' coast. You understand, he knew he couldn't show up around there. So we swapped. I'm glad to find out he didn't exaggerate about t' silvers. If you don't mind, I'm goin' back with you to get 'em."

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Author of "The Web of the Sun."

'The first part of the story briefly retold in story form

THOMAS STRAWBRIDGE, salesman for an American firearms company, faced the American consul in Caracas, Venezuela, and declared—

"The fellow who pulls slick stuff in a business deal has hit the chutes for the bowwows."

Yet ten minutes later, when Strawbridge had been apprised that the selling of arms and ammunition in Venezuela was illegal, he was on his way to General Adriano Fombombo, President of the revolutionary State of Rio Negro, with an address and a recommendation slipped into his hand by the consul at their farewell handclasp.

Strawbridge realized his inability to find the address—an ancient usage had given the name to the street corners instead of to the streets—and enlisted the services of the diffident young bull-fighter, Felipe, who nonchalantly led the way to a blue-fronted house.

The door was opened by a negro.

For some minutes the negro played the rôle of ignoramus until satisfied that Strawbridge was not an agent of the Government, then introduced himself as Guillermo Gumersindo, editor of *El Correo del Rio Negro* at Canalejos, the seat of Fombombo's Government, whither he offered to take Strawbridge.

"When do we start?" asked Strawbridge, thinking of a huge order of rifles from the revolutionary general.

"When you feel like it, *señor*. Now, if you're ready."

The same afternoon Gumersindo, Strawbridge and Felipe started for the northern province in the editor's automobile.

Once inside the free and independent territory of Rio Negro Strawbridge beheld the fruits of Fombombo's dictatorship in the form of a huge canal to connect with the Orinoco being dug by filthy and ill-nourished prisoners, known as "reds." They crowded about the machine. One of them hung over the side and begged:

"*Señor*, I had a pretty daughter, little Madruja. I meant to give her to Esteban for a wife, but the *jefe civil* broke up my home and sent me here. *Señor*, are you going to Canalejos?"

Felipe put in:

"I will find your Madruja, *señor*, and care for her as if she were my own. Do you give her to me?"

"*Oh, si, si. Un millón gracias!*"

Along the entire way to Canalejos Strawbridge expounded the virtues of American democracy, to which Gumersindo replied that they were pleasant enough theories, but that in Venezuela the Government, because of the unreliability of the peons, had to be a dictatorship. The practise was amply illustrated after Strawbridge's meeting with Fombombo at the gate of Canalejos. Waiting to enter behind them was a peon on horseback.

"What are you doing on that horse, Guillermo Fando? Is it yours?" asked Fombombo.

"*Si*, your Excellency," replied the man.

"Take it at once to my cavalry barracks and deliver it to Coronel Saturnino. A donkey will serve your purpose."

The peon obeyed.

As the party neared the Plaza Mayor they saw a crowd gathered about Fombombo's house waiting for the performance of a legal wedding ceremony. Felipe, discovering that the bride was little Madruja and her affianced, Esteban, halted the ceremony in the name of her father. Madruja—a tall panthress of a girl—was sent by Fombombo to his house—where Strawbridge was also to be a guest—to await an investigation.

Evening brought the meeting of Strawbridge with Fombombo's household—his tiny Spanish wife in her Carmelite nun's habit, taken to fulfil a vow for the recovery of her sister, and Coronel Saturnino, who explained the intentions of Fombombo for the

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expansion of Rio Negro finally to include all Venezuela, the first step to be an attack on San Geronimo, for which campaign Strawbridge enlisted.

Strawbridge, whose enthusiasm had been fired by the vision of a big order for rifles, went to bed with nothing having been agreed upon by Fombombo.

Next morning in the street Felipe, drunk and outraged, poured out to Strawbridge the tale of the abuse he had suffered the night before. He had gone to the general's house to serenade Madruja, whereupon Fombombo opened the window and called:

"Sing to us, Felipe. As to your paternal duties, your ideas went out of date with the Neanderthal man five hundred thousand years ago."

Laughing, Strawbridge excused himself and went on toward the cathedral where he met Gumersindo, but not until he had called upon a hardware store and discovered from the clerk, Josefa, that because the populace was taxed heavily at any sign of prosperity, their business methods were hopelessly antiquated.

RETURNING, Strawbridge passed the dense hedge near the Plaza and heard a woman and a man quarreling. A few minutes later Señora Fombombo left the garden and hurried into the State house. When he investigated Strawbridge could not find the quarreling parties.

Strawbridge found Señora Fombombo in the music room.

"May I ask why you followed me here?" she questioned slowly.

"Sure. I heard a rough-house over in the garden, and I saw you come out of the gate. I knew they had frightened you, and it made me mad. I'll go along with you whenever you go to the cathedral, so none of these toughs can scare you."

"That is very kind, and it's a very unexpected kindness, Señor Strawbridge. I am very grateful——"

While watching the sunset Señora Fombombo and Strawbridge unburdened themselves to each other. Señora Fombombo—Dolores—was struck numb by the recital of her husband's cruelties; Strawbridge left cold by his apparent lack of business foresight. Strawbridge was convinced that he should offer advice to Fombombo and started off to find him.

In the Plaza he was accosted by Felipe and Esteban, who was half-married to Madruja. It was from them he learned that Josefa, the little hardware clerk, had been imprisoned for telling him about the Government tax system; and from him the bull-fighter and his friend learned that Strawbridge had joined the expedition against San Geronimo.

"And," said Esteban, "it makes no difference if *he* is right or wrong. You will help him steal my Madruja, steal Señor Fando's horse, steal Señor Rosario's ranch, put Josefa in irons, do this, that and the other, break our bodies, destroy our souls, cut us down and grind us like corn in his mill!"

The Venezuelans could not understand Strawbridge and his chase after business; he was at a loss to gather the secret of their careful questioning of him. But for a moment he wondered if there was not room in his business philosophy for a little personal consideration.

His next move brought him to the west wing of the *palacio* where he found Fombombo with Madruja. Disgusted, Strawbridge spoke to the general of his relationship to Madruja, and this little matter, as well as that of the imprisonment of Josefa, was waved aside so effectively by Fombombo that Strawbridge had to admit defeat for the first time in his salesmanship life. He could not sell an American moral principle to Fombombo.

As Strawbridge turned to say good-by to Madruja she looked over his shoulder and at the doorway, and mouthed one word——

"Esteban!"

In a moment Strawbridge whirled and flung himself in a tackle at Esteban, from whose hand flew the knife intended for Fombombo's heart.

Esteban, instead of being executed or imprisoned, was ignominously kicked out of the palace by the guards. Thus Fombombo sought to undermine his morale.

The expedition of San Geronimo took the cavalcade past the hacienda of an English meat-packing company, which was tended by George Tolliver and his wife, Lizzie. From them the army took twenty horses, three cows, fifty chickens and eleven ducks, and Strawbridge took a headful of condemnations of Fombombo.

In the actual attack on the town, when Fombombo's cavalry under Lieutenant Rosales were about to be repulsed, Strawbridge, suddenly seized with the primitive instinct to fight, swung the cavalry charge and won the day, but it cost him a wound in one hand, which was struck by a bullet as he was attempting to get atop a house.

With effort he made his way to the river to get medical aid from a ship. He found his help in Noe Vargas, commander of the *Concepcion Inmaculada*, who in lieu of surgical bandages offered him the use of his one clean shirt. Characteristically Strawbridge began to talk on his favorite topic—business.

THE two men were still talking business when they returned to the deck. Strawbridge had excited himself somewhat by explaining that if the revolutionists took San Geronimo it would mean for him an order of thousands of rifles and cases of ammunition. This meant a rich commission. The skipper and the drummer stood on deck listening to the gunshots which would decide the American's commission. The reports came in gusts.

Strawbridge peered in the direction of the fighting. He tiptoed and moved about the deck, but all he could see was the haze of semi-smokeless powder hanging over the city in the direction of *casa fuerte*. The two acquaintances stood listening and listening to the far-off volleys. They tried to distinguish between the guns of the Federals and those of the insurgents. Presently the captain ejaculated:

"*Caramba!* To think this fighting may put a fortune in your pocket!"

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The drummer nodded.

"It may do it. —— it, I hope Saturnino wins!"

Both men stared cityward. The volley firing had almost died out. In its place came a desultory snapping which gave Strawbridge the impression of some person shooting the last few rats in a corn-bin. Now a rat would be found behind a plank—*bang!* Then two would start from a covert—*bang! bang!*

These were the sounds which came from the city. Single reports at irregular intervals. There was something dreadful and cold-blooded about it.

Suddenly Captain Vargas pointed.

"*Mire!* Yonder they come out of the *calle!* Look!"

Sure enough, through the palms the drummer saw a line of soldiers march out of a street into the *playa*. Captain Vargas turned and rushed below for a telescope.

The drummer screwed up his eyes against the glare and peered without breathing. He was trying to find out whether he was thousands of dollars winner, or whether his side had lost. In the heat the soldiers and the quay danced and shimmered. It was impossible to tell whether they were Federals or rebels.

However, the crowd fell into a definite arrangement. A line of men were standing up against the low adobe walls while another line stood opposite to them in the *playa*.

A kind of crawling went over Strawbridge. His heart began beating heavily, and he stared at the scene with fascinated eyes. At that moment Captain Vargas rushed up on deck with the telescope.

Strawbridge turned, almost jerked the instrument from the Venezuelan and fumbled at it with his good hand and the wrist of his wounded arm. The captain helped him, and he peered through the glass. Views of palms, of blank walls, of roofs and rolling clouds swung back and forth, up and down; then abruptly appeared a line of men standing against a wall.

At the very first glimpse Strawbridge's whole ventral cavity seemed to collapse. At the head of the unhappy column stood Lieutenant Rosales. The drummer could make out even his sharp dusty features. A figure in a cassock stood in front of the lieutenant holding up a cross.

A nervous spasm swung the lens out of line. When he refocused it Lieutenant Rosales had disappeared from the head of the column, and an ordinary peon stood next. A solitary rifle report reached the *Concepcion Inmaculada*.

Strawbridge stopped looking and handed the glass to the captain with a shaking hand. His mouth was so dry he could scarcely speak.

"That—that—that was—Rosales——"

"Your friend?"

Strawbridge nodded.

"Then the insurgents have lost?"

Strawbridge nodded again. Then he went to a coil of rope in the shade of the mainsail and sat down. The slow reports came to him from the end of the *playa*—*bang—bang—bang*——

Rosales— Saturnino— Gumersindo—the peons, the indomitable peons who had ridden out with their lives in search of liberty. The banging would never, never cease.

The horror, the pathos of it, shook the drummer. He leaned forward on his knees and let his head go limply in his folded arms. He did not care whether he lived or died.

From the end of the *playa* the slow reports assaulted his ears. After a while they stopped. There was a singing in his ears as if he had taken quinin. Presently Captain Vargas said—

"They are coming down here."

Strawbridge paid no attention. All of his friends on that brave adventure were gone. Gumersindo with his strange philosophy was no more, nor the mocking Saturnino, nor the kindly priest— Captain Vargas was saying:

"Remember, *mi amigo*, you are my first mate if any one should ask. You have been on the *Concepcion Inmaculada* all the time. You and I did not fly as the other cowardly vessels because we felt that Justice, God and the Federal forces must win."

Strawbridge looked up at the captain and nodded mechanically. He could feel that his face was putty-colored. The two men ceased talking and watched the approach of the Federal troops.

As Strawbridge stared at the marching men he scrutinized the officer at the head of the column, a graceful figure of medium height with slender waist and broad shoulders. This man had just executed a whole column of insurgents, but he bore his bloody deed with a light heart. He walked jauntily

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with his vizor tipped up and a hand resting lightly on the hilt of his sword.

The drummer tried to make out the features of this man upon whom his own fortunes, even his own life, rested so heavily. He peered intently through the downpour of sunshine.

As he looked a queer illusion took place. The face of the strange officer seemed to melt and change into the features of Coronel Saturnino. A kind of exaltation shone through the dust on this handsome and familiar face. The drummer was shocked at such a resemblance to his executed friend; then in the ranks he espied the black face of Gumersindo.

Strawbridge thought he was going mad. At that moment the officer at the head of the column whipped out his sword and saluted the drummer on deck.

"*Bravo*, Strawbridge!" he shouted joyfully, "I have heard how you stopped a panic and headed a cavalry charge against the ambuscade on the roofs. *Mire*, my *bravos!* There stands the man who won the battle of San Geronimo!"

Under his violent revulsion the drummer could scarcely breathe. He gaped and stared.

"What! What! Is that our troops! My God, I thought you were all dead—executed. I thought I saw poor Rosales facing a firing-squad!"

Saturnino lost his ebullience.

"You mean at the end of the *playa*?"

"Yes."

"That was Rosales. His forces gained the *casa fuerte* by a most gallant charge from the flank; then he tried to hold the fort against my own troops."

Saturnino's voice took a metallic tang.

"I had to win the stronghold by fighting half my own troops. That young whelp's insurrection almost frustrated my plans."

Strawbridge was dumfounded.

"You mean—he deserted you in battle—turned on you in the midst of battle?"

Saturnino waved a hand.

"There had been a plot brewing in Canalejos against General Fombombo for a long time. It came to a head in Rosales."

He shrugged.

"*Cal* You can scarcely blame a *joven* of spirit for playing the game. If he had won—" Saturnino looked at the town and the wide river—"*caramba*, he would have won a nucleus for a State of his own thrust in between Federal and insurgent territory. *Cal* It was quite a stroke. I think I will give the lad a military funeral. Such souls as his have made the Latin race great."

Just then the coronel's eyes fell on the drummer's bandaged hand.

"*Ohe, mi amigo*, I see you are wounded!"

XVIII

THE sheer human waste involved in the execution of Lieutenant Rosales shocked Thomas Strawbridge and filled him with a fundamental discouragement toward all Venezuela. What fire and courage had been wantonly squandered! Could nothing have been done to reclaim so brilliant a daredevil?

However, Strawbridge was the only one who brooded over Rosales' untimely death. The captors of San Geronimo were very jovial and very busy.

Saturnino began a series of confiscations which worked with machine-like efficiency. No doubt in his plans for the attack on San Geronimo the *coronel* had worked out the details of this confiscation.

From some source he had obtained a list of the wealthy citizens in the captured town, and now he began collecting what he called "voluntary contributions to the insurgent cause." No doubt to call it "voluntary" jumped with his mood. The *coronel* fostered the "will to give" by explaining to the prospective contributor what would occur in event the sum marked against his name was not forthcoming.

He was forced to carry this threat into effect in only two instances. One cocoa broker he chained bareheaded in the plaza and kept him there all day with a pitcher of water just out of his reach. Strawbridge got a glimpse of this wretch but hurried away for fear that he should get himself into trouble by pushing the water closer.

The other man Strawbridge simply heard about. He was shot. The plaza incident was designed purely as a publicity measure, a method of teaching cheerful and abundant donations to a worthy cause. Its value could hardly be questioned.

But the *coronel's* methods of suasion were not always physical. When he occupied the big wireless telegraph which the Federal authorites had constructed at San Geronimo he persuaded the Federal officer to stay at his post.

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The wireless plant was a little east of the city, on one of those long gentle knolls in the llanos. It was a quiet place, barring the whine of the radio, and it was a place free from the scents left by the battle around *casa fuerte*. Strawbridge often walked out there.

It was operated by a dark, silent little man. There was a humanity about Strawbridge which eventually drew the operator out.

One night the two were sitting outside the station looking up at the stars and cooling off after the day's heat. This man was an Austrian, as indeed all the wireless operators in Venezuela were foreigners because the system itself was new and as yet there were no natives trained for the positions. The Federal Government had given this Austrian the rank of lieutenant, and he had been a regular officer in the Venezuelan Army.

As the two men conversed presently the ex-lieutenant began a half-hearted defense of his desertion. He said he would not hear to it at first, that he insisted that Coronel Saturnino imprison him or stand him up before a firing-squad; but the *coronel* scouted such an idea. He said that really the *coronel* was the kindest-hearted man. He had showed him where he was wrong.

"You are a wireless operator," said the *coronel*. "You should consider yourself strictly a part of your machinery, equally efficient for either side that owns the plant. It would do me no good to execute you and replace you with another man. If the Federals ever recapture this town, they will certainly feel the same way about it. You are as much a part of your plant as the aerials overhead."

The little Austrian told this one night as he sat staring up at the aerials swung high against the stars.

"I am just as much a part of this plant as those aerials," he repeated gloomily. "They receive messages from anywhere and transmit them correctly—to any one."

It rather disgusted the drummer.

"Even the aerials have a static," he said, "which sometimes interferes with *their* transmission. I suppose *you* have no static?"

The dark little man seemed disturbed by this but merely repeated his formula, "he was a part of his plant." Heaven knows with what more casuistry Coronel Saturnino had beguiled him. To Strawbridge there was something smudged and pitiful about the little operator, rather than treacherous.

IN ALL these functionings of warlike ethics Strawbridge yielded a rather shocked acquiescence to the logic of the situation. In only one instance did the drummer become personally involved, and that was when a revolutionary typical Latin-American squad went aboard the *Concepcion Inmaculada*.

It was a queer scene on the schooner's deck with the sun boiling pitch out of her strakes and a squad of short, brown, empty-faced riflemen standing in the heat listening to Saturnino, Strawbridge and Captain Vargas thresh out the rights of the matter.

At Captain Vargas' request Strawbridge explained to Saturnino that he, Captain Vargas, had remained at San Geronimo during the revolutionary attack at the drummer's assurance that he and his schooner would receive complete justice at the hands of the insurgents.

Saturnino assented to this with the utmost graciousness.

The captain himself then added that he did not fly with the other cowardly schooner owners because he confided then and he confided now in the integrity of the *revolutionistas*, the nobility of their cause and the spotless characters of their leaders.

Saturnino bowed deeply over the tar-streaked deck and assured Captain Vargas that his confidence honored his heart as his judgment honored his intellect.

The captain then asked the *coronel* for assistance in getting his tonka beans and balata aboard the *Concepcion Inmaculada*, and he would sail and spread abroad tidings of the justice and equity of the *revolutionistas*, and this, no doubt, would greatly aid their cause.

The *coronel* agreed to this heartily, but suggested that, since all the barter on the wharf had become insurgent property by force of capture, the insurgents now stood in the shoes of the original owners of the property, and that he, Coronel Saturnino, should be paid for the freight.

Vargas became thoughtful at this, and began saying that he had already paid the owner for the goods. When the *coronel* asked him for a receipt, the skipper made some vague excuse about the receipt not having been delivered, but he assured the *coronel* that payment had been made.

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Saturnino said he did not doubt this; he said if he were acting for himself he would deliver the freight at once and allow el Capitán Vargas to sail. But he was not acting for himself. No; every transaction he performed had to be accounted for with the strictest business formality to President Fombombo, in order to be sure that every citizen should be treated with an exact and an impartial justice.

Therefore *el capitán* would excuse the technicality, but he would have to pay for his tonka beans and rubber again, in order that he, Saturnino, might have a proper record of the deal. Then the captain could file a claim if he wished with the insurgent Government against the man who originally took the money, and thus he would infallibly get it back again.

Captain Vargas' good-humored face became serious at this; but eventually the three men went below into the skipper's cabin, and there Vargas opened a strong-box and turned over to Saturnino a considerable quantity of American gold-pieces and several ounces of raw gold which the skipper had traded for at the mouth of the Caroni River. When the soldiers had lugged the box of money up on deck Captain Vargas' cheerfulness returned, and he requested that soldiers be furnished to load the schooner with the beans and rubber on the wharf.

The *coronel* seemed surprized.

"On the wharf?"

"*Seguramente, señor*," repeated the skipper, also surprized. "That was the cargo consigned to me."

"But, *señor*," demurred the *coronel*, "you can not expect the revolutionary Government of Rio Negro to be bound and crippled by the contracts of its enemies. We would soon land in a pretty *impasse*."

"But you sold me the balata on the wharf yourself!"

"*Cal* No! Your tonka beans and balata will be delivered in their proper turn. Here, I will give you a receipt for the money. Now this balata we are going to ship to Rio——"

Coronel Saturnino was drawing forth a receipt book to write Captain Vargas a receipt when the injured sailor forgot all caution and broke into all manner of Spanish abuse. He declared the *revolutionistas* were thieves, cutthroats and rascals, exactly what he had heard and believed all the time. He shouted that Saturnino might keep the rubber, tonka beans and gold, that he was going to sail away and never cruise up the accursed Orinoco again!

Strawbridge too was incensed at such barefaced robbery. He declared that such methods were bad business, that Saturnino would ruin all possible commerce in Rio Negro, that the country's reputation was worth more than a cargo of balata.

"It's just like Ben Bartlett, the great American poet, says, *coronel*," cried Strawbridge earnestly. "You must recall his famous poem entitled, 'Has It Ever Struck You?' Everybody knows the lines. I'll bet they are pasted up in half the offices in America. Now listen to this. The poet says:

"All of us know that money talks throughout our glorious nation;
But money whispers low compared to business reputation.
For men will talk this wide world o'er; take this under advisement.
To have them talking for you is the wisest advertisement.
Pull off no slick nor crooked deal, for pennies or for dollars.
Lord, think of all the trade you'll lose if just one sucker hollers."

For some reason these admirable verses seemed to irritate Coronel Saturnino more than all the abuse shouted by Captain Vargas. He turned sharply on Strawbridge.

"*Señor*," he snapped, "there is a difference between a stupid business conducted in the midst of profound peace and a band of men struggling for life in the midst of war. In peace one can look to the future, but in war we must seize on the present.

"That barter on the dock represents so much available capital for our insurgent Government. Do you imagine I am going to divide it with a private individual when the salvation of our whole country hangs in the balance?"

Captain Vargas reiterated his intention of sailing away without more ado down the river; but Coronel Saturnino then informed him that the insurgent Government would be forced to conscript the *Concepcion Inmaculada* for the purpose of freighting their barter to Rio.

Oaths, arguments and prayers availed nothing against the *coronel*. The *Concepcion Inmaculada* would be employed by the provisional Government until hostilities ceased.

As Strawbridge returned up the *playa*

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with the *coronel*, that officer's good humor returned. He began smiling again a little ironically.

"Now this matter of the *Concepcion Inmaculada*. If our revolution wins, Señor Strawbridge, I will be accounted in history as a great financier; if we lose, I will be known as a thief and a murderer. In your own country, *señor*, have you ever discovered any other difference between thieves and financiers, except that the one loses and the other succeeds?"

ON THE third day a part of the insurgent cavalry set out back to Canalejos. The town was now "consolidated." It belonged inside the red line on the map in General Fombombo's study. Strawbridge decided he would go back with the squadron.

During these three days the drummer's wounded hand had been growing steadily worse. Coronel Saturnino tried to persuade the American to remain in San Geronimo until his wound healed, but Strawbridge declared he had important business with General Fombombo. He said he was afraid that the capture of so many Federal rifles would ruin his trade with the general.

Saturnino assured him the acquisition of the rifles in *casa fuerte* would not influence the general in the slightest degree. But Strawbridge was far from convinced. He had seen Saturnino's word tested often enough to doubt it. He knew the *coronel's* Latin penchant for a pleasant falsehood rather than an unpleasant truth.

But behind this anxiety about the rifles Strawbridge was homesick for Canalejos. He really wanted to see the *señora*, to sit on the piazza in the evenings, to listen to her play the piano. Thoughts of her came to him with an ineffable charm and sweetness.

So on the third day he set out with the troops, with a wounded hand and the vision of a slender music-making figure in a nun's garb moving before him like a mirage over a desert.

The drummer had not traversed twelve kilometers before his wound took a wicked turn. With the jolting of his horse the aching increased, and the arm swelled clear up to his shoulder.

He grew feverish; then somehow in the furnace of the llanos he got an idea that he was in the cavalry charge again. He suddenly began spurring his horse and waving an imaginary carbine at a roof full of Federals. Then the Federals seemed to capture him. He struggled terrifically, but the Federals pinioned him and were going to execute him just as Rosales had been executed.

Thereafter Strawbridge's delirium was broken by intervals of clarity. Several times he became rational, to find himself bound fast to a litter which was swung between two mules. Then he would be about to be executed again.

For a long time when the drummer emerged into an interval of clear thinking, he found himself in the furnace of sunshine on the llanos; an eternity or two later he regained consciousness to find himself shuddering with cold and the sky above him filled with stars. The squadron had gone on ahead and had left the sick man with Father Benicio, Gumersindo and the pack-mules.

On the morning of the second day Strawbridge thought he heard the priest say they would soon be at home. The next thing the drummer knew he lay in a great bed with cold packs on his hand and arm and all over him. And he saw what to him was the most beautiful face in the world looking down at him weeping silently. The American had barely the strength to extend his good hand to the woman.

"*Señora*," he whispered.

The woman suddenly sobbed aloud.

"Oh, *señor*, they have told me what a hero you were!"

Then the *señora* flickered out again.

XIX

THOMAS STRAWBRIDGE could understand only snatches of Benavente's satire which the *señora* was reading. When the Spanish girl read she reverted to the soft Castilian pronunciation of her childhood, and Strawbridge's ear was accustomed to the hard Colonial accent of South America.

Benavente has a leaning toward the theme of unfaithful wives, and the comedy which the *señora* had chosen to read was of this type.

As the reading progressed the mood of the satire, the quirks and turns of Benavente's wit, played over the girl's face as if from some delicate changing illumination, as indeed it was. Presently the sick man gave up any effort to follow the text in the

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sheer pleasure of watching her. He had never before observed such a radiance about her, such a fine ardent life in her.

The drummer's nationality evoked the thought that some artist ought to paint Dolores sitting thus reading. It was his American instinct to commercialize the moment, this time not for its monetary value but for its pleasure value.

He was under the abiding American delusion that pleasures are somehow bottleable; that a pleasure can be commanded to stand still in the heavens, somewhat after the fashion of Joshua's sun. It is the command of these American Joshuas which have inflicted on the world the phonograph, the camera, the college annual, place-card collections and the family album.

As the drummer lay studying the *señora's* face he observed when she smiled a little dimple in her left cheek. Somehow this tiny discovery stirred the sick man in a peculiar way.

He watched it come and go with a feeling of peculiar intimacy. It seemed to advertise, ever so delicately, veiled and exquisite reserves in the nunnish figure. It amazed Strawbridge that he had not seen until just now how lovely the *señora* was. It seemed as if beauty had been spilled over her.

He lay warming himself in this miracle when the girl looked up, studied his face a moment, then accused playfully:

"*Ca!* *Señor*, you are not listening to a word I read. What are your thoughts?"

The sick man was taken aback when he was thus brought up to realize the vague complex of admiration, sensuous longing and wistfulness which moved his heart for the wife of another man. He moistened his lips to say something when the *señora* assisted him.

"I dare say you are lying there thinking about your business?"

The drummer accepted the suggestion.

"Perhaps I was."

"You mustn't worry about it."

At this negative suggestion Strawbridge did begin to worry.

"I think I have a right to, *señora*, when my trip down to San Geronimo spoiled the very thing I went after."

"How is that?"

The sick man tossed his head on his pillow.

"Oh, you know I wanted to sell the general rifles. Well—I helped him capture all he can use—ruined my own sale."

The salesman laughed a little, but he was not amused.

The girl did not smile.

"Has your trade really fallen through after all you've done?"

"Sure. A sale can slip away from you just so easy."

He lay staring at the ceiling with hollow, troubled eyes.

The girl looked at her patient with a faint, tender smile.

"Tell me, Tomas, why do you place such a great stress on selling, selling, selling."

He looked at her, weakly surprized.

"Why, that's my job."

"Yes, I know; but you will sell to some one else if not to the general."

"But the idea is not to miss a sale—to get every one, to do a big business."

The *señora* laughed outright but kindly.

"Yes, but what is the object of your big business that you work at it with such a fury? You've already made the money you need."

"I didn't know I worked at it in such a fury."

"*Ca!* You do!"

The drummer pondered a moment.

"Well, a man just naturally wants a big business, and besides my old man expects it—I'll lose my job if I don't."

"*Pues*, your 'old man' then; why does he want a big business? What does he mean finally to do with it?"

Strawbridge, with a sick man's suggestibility, stopped fretting about his own sale and lay pondering gently what his old man meant to do with his business. He could not imagine his old man *doing* anything with his business except running it, expanding it, beating down competitors with it. Just then Strawbridge recalled an explanation which is current with every American and which finds expression in every American paper and magazine, so Strawbridge repeated it.

"Why, business is a game with my old man, *señora*; he never will stop because that's his game. He takes a pride in seeing how big a business he can develop, just as he tries to make a low golf-score. Business is the American game."

La señora smiled at such naïveté. She might not have smiled had she known that Strawbridge had sounded for her the depth of American popular philosophy on the

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point; but, not knowing that, she put it down to the drummer's general childishness.

"Tomas," she said gently, "do you really think that a game, any game, is the whole of a man's life? Would you be willing, Tomas, to spend the whole of your life playing a game?"

"That's what everybody says in America, *señora.*"

"Surely Americans must be wrong."

"I don't know. What do you think?"

"I have wondered. You are the only American I ever knew, Tomas, and you were so big and strong and restless, I could not help saying to myself:

" 'Why is he so restless? He is not poor, any one can see that, so what does he mean to do with his fortune that he rushes so to get?' "

La señora quoted her thoughts pensively and then added—

"Still, I suppose I do know."

"Why, why?" blurted out the drummer, greatly surprized.

"You wish to make your fortune equal to that of some wealthy girl's?"

"A wealthy girl's——"

The drummer looked at the Spanish girl quite blankly; then as her implication penetrated him he was moved to a somewhat abrupt denial.

"No, *señora;* no skirts for mine, at least not yet——"

He shifted his bulk a trifle and lay looking at her defensively. Then he saw where her logic had led her.

"Why, the idea! We were talking about why all Americans worked so, and you think they work because they want to get married. What an idea!"

"But doesn't that explain a great many, *señor?*"

"Mighty few business fellows. When we are boys we have our sweethearts, of course; but when we get out into business women sort of drop out of our lives for eight or ten years. We chase 'em a little, but not much.

"Later when our business justifies it we buy us a motor, a bungalow and a girl—I mean, we pick out a girl and marry her; but getting married is just a symptom that a man is getting on in his business; it's not the aim of his business at all. The business clicks away just the same whether he marries or not."

It would be difficult to say just how much the *señora* was moved at this reversal of ordinary human motives. She looked at the drummer for several moments and finally asked in a queer voice—

"How do you decide you have reached the stage to marry, Señor Tomas?"

"Oh, that depends on your *ideels.* When I was a kid I thought fifteen a week and a flivver would do. As I got older my *ideels* went up, and now I've got to have ten thousand a year and a twelve-cylinder."

"And you have no particular girl in view?"

The drummer laughed weakly.

"When you've got ten thousand a year you don't have to have any particular girl in view—you've got to keep out of view or some flapper'll land you."

The *señora* looked at her patient and shook her head.

"I don't understand it, Tomas," she said gently. "It seems to me you deserve something finer than what you say. It's so—like a machine."

She flushed faintly, then glanced at her wrist-watch. She laid down her book and arose, saying that she must make the sick man some broth.

"You'll be back soon, *señora?*" he asked anxiously.

She smiled at him, picked up a salver from a table and went out.

WITH the departure of the *señora* the sense of pleasure which had enveloped Strawbridge also vanished. It gave him the same feeling of loss that he experienced at times when he stepped out of the glow and romance of a theater into a dull, prosaic street. Still after all it was in dull, prosaic streets where money was made and ambitious young fellows gained headway.

A queer little query trickled into the drummer's mind if it would be possible, if it were in the scope of things to take some of the glow and romance of the theater out into life, to keep it there, always to have this dear warmth in his heart—if the *señora*——

A little quiver went through the drummer's chest at whither his musing had led him. He came to a sudden stop, deserted the theater which his fancy had built and walked slowly out into the dull, prosaic street once more.

When his door opened again, Strawbridge

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saw to his disgust that it was the griffe girl who had brought him his broth. The griffe girl had had a serious part in nursing Strawbridge over his wound and the solar fever which exposure on the campaign had caused. This had bred in her considerable authority. So now as she entered she narrowed her black eyes, nodded firmly at her patient and said—

"You are to drink this, *señor*."

The salesman was outraged that the maid should have come instead of the mistress. He turned on his side away from her.

"Don't want any."

"But the *señora* said you were to drink it."

"Don't believe it's time."

"You can look at your watch, if it hasn't stopped running. You never remember to wind it. Have you wound it this morning?"

The drummer fumbled under his pillow for the watch. It was still running and stood at eleven minutes after his broth time. He wound it with the sensitive fingers of the sick. As he did so, he stared ill-temperedly out of the window and observed a number of banners waving in the plaza. He broke out on the servant:

"Look here! Are they going to have another —— *fiesta?* What's it for? Good Lord, the time they waste on *fiestas!*"

At this outbreak the griffe girl stared at him, then wrinkled her freckled snub nose and went off into such a gust of light-headed giggling that Strawbridge was irritated anew.

"What the —— you whinnying like that for?"

The girl caught up the corner of her apron and stuffed it into her mouth as a mirth extinguisher. The American received the tray on the side of his bed glaring at the girl, who plainly was about to burst out laughing again. A sudden plan to punish her came to him.

"I'm going to get up," he announced.

The griffe girl was horrified.

"Oh, *señor*, you are not!"

"Oh, *señorita*, I am!"

"But you mustn't! It'll make you worse!"

"I'm all right. I feel all right. I'm going to get up, so get out of here!" he began tumbling his big body around under the sheets.

The griffe girl became desperate.

"But, *señor*, the *señora* has not said so; the doctor has not said so; nobody has given you permission."

She was trying to shoo him back under the cover with her hands.

"Are you going to get out or not?"

"*Señor*, you must not get up!"

"Oh, all right. Stick around and get an eyeful."

He began heaving himself up, tumbling back the sheet.

The griffe girl started backing out of the room. She resisted him morally to the last ditch, motioning him back into bed, but being gradually expelled as larger and larger segments of his pink pajamas came into view. The queer part was that in Strawbridge's extreme weakness the griffe girl had assisted one of the guards in the drummer's necessities; now she was whisked out of the room by the sight of his pajamas. Such is the power of matter over mind.

STRAWBRIDGE made a sorry mess of getting on his clothes, until Pambo, the guard who had served him during his illness, came in, sent no doubt by the griffe girl, and helped the drummer. Pambo was a pleasant little fellow, and instead of discouraging the invalid's effort he congratulated him on his improvement and suggested a walk down into the plaza, which, he said, they were decorating for a *fiesta*.

After the dressing the two men left the *palacio* and moved very slowly through the sunshine to a seat in the plaza. The guard placed the invalid's chair in the deep shade of a *mamone* tree, then, promising to return in half an hour, went back to his duties in the State house.

Already a crowd of idlers were gathered in the plaza watching the preparations for the fête. The invalid sat in the color and stir with that feeling of soft weak pleasure that comes to a man after the pains of the sick bed have vanished. All things were very grateful to him—the sunshine, the movement of the crowd, the calls of the venders, the heroic statue of General Fombombo offering on a scroll to the State of Rio Negro, Liberty, Fraternity, Equality.

Presently the firemen's band in red coats and blue trousers began gathering with their instruments. Pleasure-seekers grew thicker and began renting chairs and placing

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them around a band stand which was shaped like a huge conch shell.

Girls in *mantillas* began conducting discreet flirtations with their fans. Certain bolder women moved among the crowd awaiting for some one to accost them. Two or three priests from the cathedral mingled with their flock. One father moved about with his eyes riveted on a little Bible, selecting this strange place for his religious meditations.

A number of persons saluted the drummer, which rather surprized him, for the upper-class Venezuelans are usually reserved toward foreigners. Strawbridge was thinking over his sudden popularity with the mildly amused superiority of a North American when he saw approaching him a negro in a white linen suit.

As this figure came nearer, the sick man recognized Gumersindo in gala attire. The negro bowed deeply, congratulated Strawbridge on his early convalescence, then took a copy of *El Correo del Orinoco* from his pocket and pressed it upon his friend.

"Have you read my description of the battle of San Geronimo, *mi caro señor?*" he asked warmly. "*Caramba!* I do not say I have excelled; but Father Benicio, a man of excellent judgment, assures me these pages—" he tapped the paper—"will go down to posterity as one of the great battle descriptions of history.

"You will find your own name mentioned, *mi amigo*. I have taken the liberty of comparing you with the Swiss guard at Versailles and the English regiment at Carabobo; a wounded lion, *señor*, crouched before the shield of Rio Negro!"

All this was uttered in a tone of impassioned eloquence; and now the black editor astonished Strawbridge by suddenly wringing his hand and hurrying away, leaving the paper with the invalid.

The drummer was amused at this emotion in Gumersindo which he did not understand; but his sickness had brought with it a certain pensiveness and he sat pondering on the queer springs of Gumersindo's enthusiasm. To write a history that would be handed down to posterity! What was the use of it? The American wondered what he would like to hand down to posterity, and he thought of life insurance.

Strawbridge glanced through his *Correo*. Gumersindo had written six pages of closely printed matter—the American folded the paper and laid it across his lap.

The crowd in the plaza grew more interesting. Governmental dignitaries, merchants and professional men began to arrive. Men collected in knots and conversed with excited gestures. Presently a great cheering went up, and Strawbridge saw General Fombombo traversing the plaza in the Presidential motor.

At his side sat the peon girl, Madruja. She held up her chin like a queen, and the olive line of her throat against her furs might have been a stroke of Raphael. Even in the brief glimpse of their passage Strawbridge got an impression that the general was fondling her hand.

Such uxoriousness, if it could be called such, struck the drummer disagreeably and with it came a renewed feeling of resentment for the injury put on the *señora*. It was incomprehensible how any sane man could exchange the delightful girl who had been reading Benavente at his bedside for this wild Amazon from the llanos.

The outrage set up vague fancies in the sick man's head of liberating Dolores. He thought of divorce. The Spanish girl ought to get a divorce. She had every provocation— Of course there were no divorces in Catholic Rio Negro.

THE sound of a chair being dragged close to his own caused Strawbridge to glance around. He saw Felipe smiling and settling a chair in the turf by his side.

On the other side of Felipe Esteban was unfolding another chair. The peon youth seemed thinner and more careworn than on the night when he had attacked General Fombombo.

The bull-fighter was very cordial.

"*Caramba*, I'm glad to see you alive, *señor*. I read in the paper how badly you were wounded and what a hero you were."

At the drummer's demurring gesture he persisted with renewed force.

"Oh, we know all about it. I said to Esteban:

"'You called Señor Tomas a *cobarde* because he did not choose to assist you that night in the *palacio*. Nothing could be further from the truth.'"

The peon youth on the other side of Strawbridge stopped his steady stare into the plaza to ask—

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"But why did he turn against me?"

Felipe shrugged and made a gesture.

"How should I know? Am I as deep as the sea? Perhaps to save you. Had he not used his influence on *el Presidente* no doubt you would have been rotting today in La Fortuna; but instead he had you turned out, and here you are, as free as a bird."

"I don't understand why he turned against me in a fight," repeated the peon doggedly.

"*Caramba*, if you had a head to understand that, Esteban, you would not need to sit here gnawing your fingers now. I am far brighter than you, Esteban, but this Señor Strawbridge is a dark man to me. He moves in his own way, Esteban. He is like a cayman in the Orinoco; no man can tell when or where or at what he strikes."

The drummer followed this panegyric a little uncomfortably, "Look here," he inquired, "how did I get such a swell reputation for double-crossing?"

"Howl *Carambal* Did you not despatch poor Lieutenant Rosales to his death in the *casa fuerte* in San Geronimo? He would have failed; but you gave him the strength to go on—but how far?"

The bull-fighter held up a stubby forefinger and whispered an answer to his question:

"Just as far as you pleased that he should go—and then he fell. But you, did any blame attach to you? None at all.

"You had a wealthy ship-owner sail up the Orinoco and bribe the insurgents in your behalf. Oh, we have heard everything, not through this paper, but, you know, from mouth to mouth. *Caramba*, this ship-owner poured out gold for you—box after box. It was easy enough to see whose gold it was!"

"Whose?" cried Strawbridge, quite amazed at so grotesque a misinterpretation of the facts.

"Whose! Whose! *Diantre*, Esteban, such a man! Why, *señor*, whose should it be but your own! Do you fancy any ordinary sailor would have so much gold to fling about? No, it was your own gold, and only He Who Looks Down upon the Doings of Men, only He knows how many other ways you are reaching out, raking this poor country of Rio Negro into your power.

"You had poor Rosales killed; he would have been a rival of yours one day, for he had the pride of Satan. You have a warm friend in Señor Tolliver, and yet he has been the enemy of all *revolutionistas* for years. You have twisted *el Presidente* around your finger, and—" Felipe paused and winked delicately— "and I hear that *la señora* is no bitter enemy of yours either! *Carambal* What a man!"

Strawbridge flushed and dropped his amused look.

"Say, just leave the *señora* out of this; will you?"

"How?"

"She is a lovely girl laboring under the most painful circumstances. I have done nothing more than any gentleman would do if he had a spark of manhood."

Felipe looked at the American rather blankly.

"*Seguramente, señor;* any *caballero* would do what you have done—if he had a spark of manhood. *Seguramente!* I—I hope you will allow a friend to—to—*cal*—to congratulate you, *señor?*"

This equivocal sentence brought the conversation to an *impasse*. The drummer was on the verge of taking offense at the innuendo, when Esteban interrupted in a very miserable voice,

"Señor Strawbridge, you are a wise man. Tell me what I can do to regain Madruja?"

The drummer was touched at the peon's unashamed desolation.

"Esteban," he said seriously, "I don't know what you can do. I have been thinking over your very question—in a general way. There are no courts to separate her from—from him. There is no public opinion to force him to give her up. There is no——"

"But, *señor*," interrupted the peon, "she —*mi Madruja adorata*—is not with *el Presidente* any more!"

Strawbridge leaned forward and peered around the bull-fighter at the peon.

"Not with him any more? What do you mean, Esteban?"

The youth made a desperate gesture.

"May the lightning strike ——, but he has flung her out into the streets, *señor!*"

Strawbridge stared.

"Are you crazy, Esteban! I saw Madruja and the general drive past in a motor not ten minutes ago!"

Felipe interrupted.

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"No, you did not, *señor*. That was another girl he has picked up. Madruja is —well, to speak plainly—Madruja is growing heavy after the manner of women, and really now—" the bull-fighter shrugged and opened a hand—"really now what could *el Presidente* do but turn her out?"

He looked from one of his friends to the other and said intimately—

"Now really—I dare say we have all been fathers at one time or another—what else could he have done?"

Strawbridge did not hear this observation. He sat perfectly still in his chair and said in a shocked tone—

"He really did——"

Felipe answered again.

"*Ciertamente, señor*, but any one could have foretold that in advance. Do you not recall, Esteban, I foretold you that in advance? Do you not recall my saying—

"'Esteban, *mi bravo*, cheer up. Presently *el Presidente* will grow weary of your Madruja and you will have her back.'"

The drummer sat pondering the facts in a benumbed manner. Somehow this Madruja affair touched him painfully. Presently he looked at Esteban and said:

"Well—did you get her back? Do you want her back?"

Felipe replied for his friend.

"*Diabolo*, no; he didn't get her back! *El Presidente* has a way with women. The poor girl is completely mad. She lives alone in a big house and weeps night and day. She says the general will come back to her as soon as he grows weary of this new mistress.

"'But, Madruja,' I argued with her, 'he will always have a new mistress! He always has had. Now take back poor Esteban. Look at him. See how he loves you. Your poor Esteban!'

"But she curls up her pretty mouth.

"'Esteban! Esteban!' she says. 'Stupid as a donkey, dull as an old hound's tooth! Do you think I would take a poor lout of a peon in this house which *el Presidente* has given me?'

"'*Pues* then,' I said, for I always did admire her; '*pues* then, take me!'

"She gave me a straight look for we were talking to her through the bars of her window.

"'You! What do you know, Señor Felipe about the grand supercivilization of the future republic of Rio Negro? Do you know how to make all these wide sandy llanos bloom and fruit? Your sword has never carved an empire—nothing but bulls!'"

The bull-fighter looked at the drummer in a puzzled fashion, shrugged and finally added—

"She is utterly mad."

XX

THOMAS STRAWBRIDGE did not know why the General's second infidelity stirred him so deeply. For some reason it filled him with a queer urgency and sent him hurrying weakly back to the *palacio* through the heat. What he meant to do when he got there, what he could do, he did not know.

The drummer reached the side door almost exhausted and rang the bell. He waited for minutes in the intense heat of a stoop in the sunshine. At last the door was opened by the griffe girl. She gave just one glance, then swooped on him, caught him about the waist and helped him inside.

"*Caramba!* Señor Tomas, you are as white as a sheet! You are about to fall! You must go to bed at once. I told you——"

"Where is your mistress?" panted the drummer.

The griffe girl was dictatorial.

"*Ca!* What do you want with the *señora?* I tell you to go to bed! I told you never to——"

The maid's question helped temper Strawbridge's impulse. After all what did he want with the *señora?* What did he mean to say to her? There was nothing to say, much less to do. He began to realize how empty was his impulse of any possible action.

"What do you want with her?" repeated the griffe girl, holding him up and leading him inside.

The drummer fumbled for an answer and then explained lamely that they were reading a play together.

The freckled maid looked up at him amazed.

"A play! *Caramba*, it must be a wonderful play!"

"Look here," frowned the American, recovering his dignity. "Can't you answer a simple question without making remarks?"

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"*Pues*, was I making remarks? You told me you were reading a play!"

"Yes, you do make remarks! —— it, you talk all the time! If you've got to chatter like that, beat it!"

She would not let go her patient for fear he might really fall and hurt himself, but she was offended.

"*Seguramente!*" she snapped, "If I ever get you in bed, trust me, I'll never lift another finger to get you out! *Caramba*, after all I've done!"

She seemed about to cry.

"As for the *señora*, she is in the music-room, and when you rush in through this heat all white and trembly to read a play I think you are crazy, that's what I think!"

"Well —— what you think! Here, let go; I can walk without you!"

He shook himself loose and walked on in weak irascibility.

The girl stood looking after him with angry tears in her eyes and much anxiety for his welfare as he passed through the transverse corridor and turned down the main hallway.

The incident rankled in Strawbridge's thoughts. He was angry at the griffe girl for her officiousness and at himself for being cross with her. Then he forgot the trifle, and his mind returned to the question of the general and the *señora*. This brought him again his sense of futility and pain.

There really was no reason why he should have come home from the plaza. Indeed there was no reason why he should have come home from San Geronimo. He ought to have got his order for rifles long ago and have gone back to New York. He had overstayed and lost everything.

He moved more and more slowly past the old doors which lined the hallway. There were no guards in the passage, drawn away no doubt by the *fiesta*. The palace seemed rather empty without them.

He was thinking of this when the door of the music-room opened and a man stepped into the hallway. He stood holding the door ajar and looking back into the room. The drummer was surprized to see that it was Coronel Saturnino. The salesman had thought the *coronel* was in San Geronimo, but no doubt he had come to Canalejos for the *fiesta*.

The expression on the office's face struck Strawbridge. For once his look of satire had vanished, and it left exposed what must have been the real Saturnino beneath all his quips and mockeries. He was speaking through the door in a low tone.

"When a man has only one desire in life, *señora*, would he not be a fool to sacrifice that? Why should he sacrifice it? Shall his one brief glimpse of existence be entirely empty? Is there any reason under the sun for him to stick at anything?"

There came a gasp from the music-room, and Strawbridge caught the phrase—

"But, Pancho, that is sacrilegious!"

"Sacrilegious!" echoed the officer in a sudden passion. "Sacrilegious—a word to trap fools with! To give up the very heart of this life here expecting another which will never come.

"Dolores, can you imagine the immeasurable unconcern with which Nature views us? And then expect me to give up the very essence of my little glimpse of existence for fear, forsooth, that the Hand That made me will not precisely approve my squirmings toward the ends for which He framed me! Puh—it's too absurd!"

He stood looking through the doorway with a pallid face; then came a return of some of his old carelessness:

"Well, *señora*, I leave you now, but I will come back one day, you might say as a missionary, to convert you to a happier view of life and the Deity. Until then, *adios*."

He bowed gracefully and turned up the passage toward the front of the palace.

The American watched the *coronel* go with considerable surprize, and also a certain questioning. The officer evidently had concluded a *tête-à-tête* with the *señora* which was unsatisfactory to him. Strawbridge was secretly glad of this; he had always been glad that Saturnino was *persona non grata* with the *señora*. He could hardly have given a reason for this sentiment.

But what set up a queer questioning in the drummer were the tones of the man and woman, and the nickname of Pancho which the *señora* had used. This diminutive and just such overtones the drummer recalled hearing through the hedge as he stood in the plaza outside the cathedral garden.

The idea that those quarreling lovers in the garden had been Saturnino and Dolores came to Strawbridge with a shock. All along had Saturnino been a suitor for the

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señora's favors? Was the officer attempting intimacies with the wife of his employer and his general?

Such duplicity filled the American with disdain. He was shocked at Saturnino.

Then as he stood thinking about it he asked himself why should he be shocked? The *coronel* was no Anglo-Saxon with a restraint cultivated by long generations of controlled ancestors. He was a Latin, a Venezuelan——

As the drummer moved toward the door of the music-room he was deeply grateful that the *señora* had repulsed the officer. He was glad that there were two persons in Rio Negro who possessed the moral solidity to resist the lickerishness of this eternal tropical sunshine of Venezuela—that is to say, the Spanish girl and himself.

The door of the music-room was still ajar when the drummer reached the entrance. He had meant to express in a roundabout way his deep moral approval of what the *señora* had just done; but what he saw in the music-room put any sentiment he meant to utter completely out of his head.

THE *señora* half-knelt before the windowseat with her head in her outstretched arms and her rosary clutched in her fingers. As a sharp accent in the picture was her hair. Her nun's cap had fallen off and revealed a great jet corona wound about her head in a complexity of cables. The glint and sheen of the light from the window fell over this luxuriant coiffure, and the slender white nape of her neck curved up into it.

The loveliness of it clutched at something in the drummer's chest as if with physical fingers. He stood silent with a queer shaken feeling. His ancient embarrassment came upon him and would have turned him silently away; but his sympathy for the girl's distress kept him standing there, moistening his lips, making up his mind to speak.

At his continued gaze the girl stirred, looked about, saw the drummer and made a little defensive movement toward her nun's bonnet.

The American protested involuntarily.

"For ——'s sake, *señora*, don't hide it. What makes you want to hide your hair?"

Her eyes showed she had been crying, but such an outbreak of admiration moved her to a brief smile; immediately she was grave again.

"It is a vow I made for my sister, *señor*."

"A vow to what?"

"To the Virgin."

"To a saint! Are you hiding your lovely hair just to keep a vow to a saint?"

"*Sí, señor.*"

"Well, I declare! Think of that—Wait, don't put it back on right now——"

Nevertheless she replaced the bonnet, smiling faintly at his protesting face. Then as she looked at him she became concerned about him.

"I didn't know you were up out of bed. You ought not to be here, Señor Tomas. You look quite worn out. Come over here on this couch by the window."

She was swiftly becoming herself again, concerned for him, softly gracious and remote. She crossed the room, took his arm and helped him to the wicker couch she had indicated. Her mere presence and touch wove a deep comfort about the sick man. Whatever were her relations with Saturnino, they faded into a small matter in the atmosphere of her delicate charm. He leaned back against the end of the couch looking at her.

"What were you crying about when I came in, *señora?*" he asked simply.

She looked at him with dark eyes that appeared slightly unfocused.

"I would rather not tell you, Señor Tomas."

"You might tell me, *señora*—I'm a mighty good friend of yours."

The girl sighed with some comfort of her own.

"Yes, you are. You are so—nice. But you don't want to be my confessor, do you, Señor Tomas?"

"I wish I could be. Who is your confessor, *señora?*"

"Father Benicio."

"Sure—it would naturally be him."

The girl noted his tone with surprise and a delicate amusement in her face.

"You seem really aggrieved. Do you want to be a priest?"

"I wish I could sit in a little box with you and hear you talk what is really in your heart, *señora*. I wish I could find out what is in your heart. I think it must be a pure and lovely place, *señora*, like one of those chapels in the cathedral with an alabaster cross and a soft rug to kneel and pray on."

The girl looked at the drummer almost with a startled expression.

"Oh, no, Señor Tomas," she denied

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almost hurriedly. "It is not like that at all. I wish it were!"

"But it is!" affirmed Strawbridge warmly. "Why, *señora*, the very first morning I saw you going to chapel I thought——"

The Spanish girl arose abruptly.

"Listen," she interrupted. "Don't talk to me of chapels and crosses and souls!"

She stood looking down on him with tragic eyes.

"I am not a person who should speak of such things. I—I——"

The American looked at her in dismay. He thought of Saturnino.

"Why—what do you mean?" he asked in a lower tone.

She studied him a moment longer.

"I was a girl when I came to Venezuela, Señor Tomas, a little girl of sixteen, just out of a convent; and then—I was dropped in a place like this!"

She made a quick gesture, spreading her hands as if to fling something from her fingers.

A rush of pity caught the sick man.

"Whatever made you come here?" he questioned gruffly, then frowned and cleared his throat.

The two understood each other with remarkable economy of words. The girl answered the implications of his question.

"Because he was rich! He had millions of pesetas, millions. My parents said it was a wonderful opportunity, and I—" she touched her breast sharply—"why, I knew nothing of life or love or marriage! They said he was a wealthy Venezuelan who owned a territory almost as large as Spain itself. Well, he does—but nobody said what he did in that territory!"

She gave a brief, shivering laugh.

The sick man arose unsteadily.

"That's the damnable point!" he trembled. "That's what I can't endure. I think about it all the time. I was sitting in the Plaza thinking about the shame he puts on you——"

The girl looked up at him.

"*Señor*, what do you mean?"

"I mean the shame and disgrace of it. I can't endure staying here seeing you continually disgraced in your own home by one stray woman after another!"

The *señora* stared at him.

"*Señor*, do you fancy I want it different?"

The drummer was astonished.

"You don't! Do you mean you condone such offense? Do you mean——"

The *señora's* black eyes grew moist at the reproach in his voice.

"Dear Señor Tomas, that is something you do not understand. You don't know how glad I am to be free of him—such a brute! Oh, *señor*, you can't imagine how horrible it was—the very sight of him—it seemed I could not endure it another day—a murderer, a robber——"

The expression on her face moved the drummer.

"At last I went to Father Benicio. I told him I would jump in the river and let the caymans eat me rather than—continue."

Strawbridge was trembling as if he himself had been tormented; yet how much of this was from sympathy, and how much from this intimate, heady topic which had suddenly sprung up between them the youth himself had not the faintest idea.

"And what did he do? What did Father Benicio say?"

The girl breathed out a sick breath.

"Oh—duty. Puh, duty to him!"

She stood breathing heavily through her open lips.

"When Father Benicio saw I really meant to kill myself—when he saw I was desperate, then—finally—he told me to wear this."

She touched her black nun's robe.

"To wear what?"

"This robe."

The drummer looked at the robe as if he had not seen it before.

"What has that got to do with it?"

"*Pues—cal*"

The *señora* began to laugh hysterically.

"When I wore this nun's robe he would not touch me—he—he— Father Benicio said he would not!"

She laughed till the tears stood in her eyes. Strawbridge stared at her. There was something dreadful about her laughter. Presently she sobered abruptly.

"Why—why was that? Why-y?"

The drummer was utterly at sea.

The *señora* shook her head.

"Father Benicio told me to wear this robe and conceal my hair."

"What an extraordinary thing!"

"Father Benicio is a very wise man."

"But there is no sense to it. Still, if it worked——"

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The drummer cogitated and presently made the observation—

"So you are not wearing it for your sister after all?"

"*Señor*, I never had a sister."

Such an extraordinary ruse required thought. The salesman sat down slowly, and the girl followed his example. She was perusing his face while Strawbridge puzzled over the unaccountable quirk in the dictator's point of view.

"Why, *señora*," he said at last as if coming to a conclusion, "that doesn't seem possible! Why, I think you are lovelier in your nun's robe than— Why, you look as pure and tender and as fair as the stars of heaven. If I——"

The Spanish girl reached out an impulsive hand and gripped the American's.

"Ah, Señor Tomas, that is because you are a dear, dear boy; it is because you yourself are pure and tender and fine!"

At her caress a queer thrill traveled deliberately up Strawbridge's arm and into his chest and body. A strange automatism seized him. A force apparently quite other than himself moved him to his own fear and dismay.

His unwounded hand went groping over the voluminous sleeve of the robe upon the soft arm of the girl. He drew her closer. Their lips met.

HER embrace had whisked away all his feeling of futility and doubt. Strawbridge knew now precisely what it was that he must do.

"First," he said, "I've got to get you out of here."

She looked at him with misty eyes and a faint sad smile.

"Out of the *palacio?*" she whispered.

"Out of Rio Negro, out of Venezuela, back to the States."

Her sweet, puzzled face amused him and made him feel tenderer than ever.

"But, dear Tomas, I am married."

"We'll get a divorce."

"But that is impossible in Rio Negro."

"It's easy in the States."

She studied his face so intently that he grew a little afraid of what she might say about the divorce. Finally she asked—

"My own dear life—when did you first *know* you loved me?"

After that the sequence of their plans to elope was continually broken by caresses and the wistful interrogations of a newly revealed love. She deprecated herself. How could he admire her in such a poor nun's robe? She had such ugly eyes. She was too thin!

Mixed in with these they planned with what coherence they could their elopement. They discussed horses, a motor, but finally decided on a small boat down the Rio Negro. Strawbridge would get one that afternoon, and the next night they would start from the piazza in the darkness. By daylight they would reach San Geronimo and the Orinoco.

The *señora* tried to make her lover realize the gravity of the undertaking, the danger and certainty of punishment if they were discovered; but the whole affair glowed on the American in a rose-colored light. They would escape of a certainty. He had never failed to do anything he set out to do, and he wouldn't now. Luck was always with him, and he was predestined to win. He was in gala mood. He commanded fortune! Once the girl put up a hand to his mouth:

"Eh, hush, don't say that! It—it reminds me of—him."

Their talk came down to the odds and ends of the affair; how large a bundle of clothes she could smuggle out of the *palacio;* the food they should carry, hammocks and *mosquiteros*.

In the midst of these trifles came the sound of many feet in the corridor. The man and the woman got away from each other quickly and sat on opposite ends of the couch, looking at the door a little anxiously when there really did come a sharp official rap. With a glance at Strawbridge the *señora* sprang up, crossed the room and opened the shutter.

In the entrance stood General Fombombo in full uniform. Banked behind him were ranks of men, most of whom were in uniform. After an instant the blur of color defined itself as Coronel Saturnino, a number of other officers, several of the Governmental dignitaries, some of the alcaldes from the surrounding villages, the negro Gumersindo in his white linen, and behind them the ranks of the palace guards in dress uniform. It was a *fiesta* assembly.

The drummer stared at the processional in the utmost amazement. A wild suspicion shot through his head that somehow General Fombombo had learned of his

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dalliance with Dolores, and now all this pomp was a movement to arrest him and send him to prison.

The American moistened his lips. He could feel the blood leave his face as he stood looking at Dolores' husband.

But the general was smiling. Indeed the faces of the whole group of dignitaries wore expressions of mysterious kindliness and good will. The black man Gumersindo seemed to labor under some beneficent excitement. The dictator began speaking, not in ordinary conversational tones but with the somewhat overemphasized articulation of an orator.

"Señor Strawbridge," he began, "we, the admiring citizenry of the independent republic of Rio Negro have chosen this fiesta and this historic spot to express to you our never dying respect, gratitude and affection of a man who, impelled by no selfish motive but moved only by a flame from the very altar of freedom itself, by the purest love of human liberty and the world-wide brotherhood of man, has hurled himself upon the field of battle and at the risk of his own life made safe the social and political securities of a young and struggling people.

"Amid the defiance of cannon and the flashing of swords, you, Señor Tomas Strawbridge, led the forces of liberty to complete and glorious victory. It is with tears of gratitude that we, the representatives of the free and independent State of Rio Negro, bestow upon you this token of our love and appreciation for your heroic act in saving the insurgent army on the bloody field of San Geronimo.

"There will come a time, Señor Strawbridge, when our beloved valley will be decked with great and smiling cities, when men and women will live with no tyrant to make them afraid. Then, carved in letters of gold in the pantheon of that happy people, will shine the name of Tomas Strawbridge, hero of San Geronimo!"

The President was moved. His eyes were misty as he drew from his pocket and pinned on the drummer's lapel a little golden decoration pendant from a rainbow-colored ribbon. It was the Order of the *Libertador* for heroic action.

Strawbridge had seen dozens of these decorations in Venezuela, but he had always put them down to the South American's love of fripperies. Now there was something about these men and their solemn, admiring faces that moved him.

A play of the most incongruous emotions kept harassing the American's nerves. He alternately flushed and paled. How grotesque it was that the general should have given him this medal just as he was planning to abduct the general's wife! As the dictator bent toward him to pin on the ribbon, the drummer caught a strong odor of musk.

After the presentation other dignitaries delivered orations reviewing Rio Negro's heroic past. They pointed out spots from the very music-room windows where martyrs had perished.

When the officials had finished, Gumersindo read his whole six pages describing the battle of San Geronimo. The black man in the white linen seldom glanced at the paper, but recited the whole from memory in an agreeable, resonant barytone.

After the ceremony the whole audience shook hands with the drummer and each man expressed his admiration with a suppleness of phrase that was very graceful and yet seemed sincere. Perhaps it was.

XXI

COME certain moments in the lives of men when the only course of action morally possible lies along immoral lines. By dint of such hard necessity, such moments lose the reproach of bad faith and assume the simple pathos of misfortune. Perhaps three-fourths of the crimes committed about women fall into this unhappy class.

Men abducted the women they loved long before convention softened that act to its symbol, the marriage ceremony. There must have been a time when the highest social virtue was for a swain to steal a girl from her jealous guardians. Upon this broad cornerstone have arisen daring, stalwart and reproductive generations, and that is the final word of approbation with which life lauds conduct.

Since that simpler era, minor moral obligations hinging on property, society, friendship, nationality and former marriages have confused, but have not transformed the issue. Today when any of these obstacles are swept aside by lovers, one feels its pathos.

It was precisely in this dilemma that

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Thomas Strawbridge labored. The little golden medal fastened on his lapel by the dictator reproached him continually as he worked in his room packing in a little canvas roll his belongings which were absolutely indispensable. He meant to carry them inconspicuously to the river.

General Fombombo was his host; he had been a prospective customer until the capture of the rifles at San Geronimo; and he still was his trusting friend. And now he, Thomas Strawbridge, was about to steal the general's wife!

The big American sickened at the thought of it, but the complementary idea of resigning Dolores never once presented itself to his mind. This would have been a desertion of something exquisitely more dear and intimate than his own flesh. There was something shrine-like about the *señora*.

With Hebraic simplicity the Bible says of a man and wife, "Ye are one," and this was meant for lovers. Thomas Strawbridge tingled and thrilled with this amazing oneness. Some miracle had occurred within him to extend his sentiency to the *señora*.

As he worked in his room she rushed upon him at intervals with such poignancy that he would lay down his packing and sigh and tremble at the sudden and sweet transfiguration. He was not himself any more. Body and soul were impermeated somehow with the sweetness of Dolores.

In the midst of one of these epiphanies came a tap at his door. The drummer had a sense of being waked out of a sleep. He saw his canvas pack under his hands and made an effort to conceal it by thrusting it hastily into an open cabinet drawer. Some of his toilet articles and clothes lay scattered about, and he made shift to cover them under the sheets of his disordered bed. It seemed to him that his jumble of packing must advertise to the world his intention of eloping with the *señora*.

When the American had concealed enough to give his room an aspect of innocence he went over and opened the door. The griffe girl stood in the hallway. Her freckled face seemed screwed up with some internal tension. Her black eyes sparkled.

"*Ohe, señora,*" she whispered, and stepped inside with her air of excitement and her glittering eyes.

Strawbridge looked at her in dismay. Plainly she knew his plans, and he thought to himself that they might as well have been published in the *Correo*.

The griffe girl burst into excited ejaculations.

"*Caramba!* How well you look! You have been cured by magic!"

She reached out and gave his arm an uncontrollable squeeze, giggled, then with an effect of legerdemain thrust into his hand a little green-gold lady's watch.

The American looked at it blankly.

"What the——?" he asked in a low tone.

His profanity shook the girl into a hysteria of choked giggles. Then she produced, also apparently out of nothingness, a blue envelope directed to himself. Instantly Strawbridge knew that it was from the *señora*, and his heart began to beat. His fingers trembled so that he could not get into the envelop with his one good hand. He was forced to ask the griffe girl to open it.

The little half-breed went at the matter in her own way, moistening one edge with her little red tongue and picking open the damp crease with a hairpin. The big American stood with his good hand gripping her plump shoulder and delaying the operation by his impatience.

The note was exceedingly brief. It said simply:

"Set my watch with yours—piazza, eleven P.M. to-morrow night.—*Dolores Juana Avilon y Bustamente.*"

The implication of the *señora's* maiden name written in full moved Strawbridge with a delicate tenderness. He looked at the letter, then at the watch. It was an old-fashioned time-piece carved on the obverse side with a faint landscape which was worn smooth in places; on its reverse was an ancient coat-of-arms with its quarterings colored by a worn but exquisite enamel.

The drummer did not know that he was looking at an heirloom of centuries; he had no idea that on the back of this watch he saw the combined coats-of-arms of the ancient Spanish families of Avilon and Bustamente. A sense of pathos moved him at the evident age of the jewel.

"Poor little girl!" he thought, to himself. "The first thing I'll do when we get to New York will be to go to Tiffany's and get her a decent watch."

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He set the timepiece with care and returned it to the griffe girl.

SUCH a number of ticklish details have to be attended to in order to bring off the simplest elopement that it seems it must be owing to the direct interposition of Providence that as many ill-mated wives are happily united to other equally ill-mated husbands as are. Americans can point with pride to the high general average of success in such affairs in the United States, and, not to speak irreverently, it becomes a kind of indirect proof that America is precisely what every American so proudly boasts of his native land—"God's Country."

For an instance of this, in the afternoon Thomas Strawbridge went down to the native market to lay in provisions against his voyage down the river. Among the little market stalls the only prepared food he could find were the cartwheels of cassava bread.

The sick man looked at this bread dubiously. He knew that at one stage in the making of cassava it was a rank poison, and he wondered if the Indians in making this bread had extracted all its bane. The sight of the loaves which had once been poison filled him with foreboding. He imagined himself and the *señora* going down the river in a small boat and becoming poisoned on this bread. What a horrible end to their romance!

The possibility depressed him. However, he purchased a loaf, had it wrapped in a palm-leaf and recalled wistfully the little delicatessen shops in Keokuk where he could order a lunch with a word. He wished keenly for the delicatessen shops as he bought some wood-like *yammi* and two or three big plantains shaped like rough bananas. When he started back home with his bundle a dozen porters besieged him to be allowed to carry it.

Later in the afternoon he went to the fish-wharf to bargain for a boat. He found clumsy crafts, each one carved out of a single log, leaky, greasy and smelling to Heaven with the stink of fish.

The drummer walked slowly from one end of the quay to the other. The notion of embarking Dolores in one of these vile boats filled him with disgust.

At last he chose the least loathly of these dugouts and began dickering with its fishy owner to buy it. The fisherman was a barefooted, chocolate-colored peon who carried a paddle about with him as a sign of his calling. He was naked from waist to sombrero. His legs were thin, but his torso rippled with muscles developed by his boating. His face, his inch of forehead and his coarse hair were just a few centuries this side of the pithecanthropus.

He could scarcely believe the *caballero* should want to buy his fish-boat. He stared and scratched his head at the marvel. "You are no poor man, *señor*. Why should you fish?"

"I fish for sport."

"*Caramba*, sport! Do you think it is sport to bake in the sun, to be flung in the rapids, to fight the crocodiles that eat your catch? Do you call it sport to pack a *tonelada* of fish on your back trying to vend them when no one will buy?"

Some fellow-fishermen drew about the two at this curious conversation. One of them interposed.

"Perhaps *el caballero* is going to fish as a penance, Simon? Perhaps he has committed some grievous sin and *el padre* has imposed——"

"*Basta!* Are you blind, Alesandro? Do you not see this *hombre* is an *Americano* and not a Christian at all? The *padre* is nothing to him."

Another voice took up the argument in the fish-scented crowd.

"An *Americano!* Perhaps he does fish for sport. They do the maddest things for sport; they run and walk and jump and fight for sport. This one went to the battle of San Geronimo and won a ribbon. There is it; you can see it for yourself on his coat."

One of the older fishers shrugged a naked shoulder.

"Sport never sent the *Americano* into the battle, brothers. I was talking to an *hombre* named Felipe, a bull-fighter; and what he said—what Felipe said about this *Americano*——"

The old peon nodded and thumped the butt of his paddle on the ground.

"What did he say?" asked Alesandro.

The ancient lifted a shoulder, pulled down his wrinkled lips, nodded at the *palacio* up the river and at the gloomy bulk of La Fortuna down the river, made a clicking sound with his tongue and went silent.

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These clicks and glances seemed to explain something. Simon, who owned the boat, looked at Strawbridge with his small black Indian eyes stretched wide.

"*Ca!* Then you don't want to fish after all?"

"Look here!" rapped out the drummer, feeling very uncomfortable. "Do I get that boat or not?"

Simon shrugged and mentioned a price which no doubt was grotesquely exaggerated according to his peon sense of value. The drummer reached in his pocket and drew out a roll of Venezuelan bills.

"I'll take it provided you'll scrub the —— thing with sand and get it clean."

The whole crowd stared at this amazingly swift trade. Here and there came a sharp intake of breath at such an amount paid for such a boat. Only the peon who owned the boat kept his head, but his excitement was shown by the sharp dints in the sides of his sun-blacked nose.

"*Señor*," he jockeyed, breathing heavily and staring at the bills, "it is impossible for me to clean the boat at such a price. Already I have given the boat away; I have pushed it into the rapids. I am a poor man, *señor*, and I can not possibly clean the boat for less than—for less than—" he stared fishily at Strawbridge, fearing to name too small a sum—"t-t-two—t-three—*si*, t-t-three more bolivars, *señor*; and it will be cheap as mangoes at that!"

The drummer drew out the three extra bolivars and tossed it to the fellow. Three bolivars are sixty cents.

"Scrub it with sand and hitch it below the *palacio* when you finish."

One of the fishermen shook his fist violently in the air, a peaceable Spanish gesture to work off unusual excitement. The oldish peon leaned forward on his paddle.

"No one must speak of this unless all of us want to——"

He drew his finger across his throat, made a clicking sound and nodded toward La Fortuna.

IT WAS sundown when Strawbridge returned to the *palacio*. In coming up the river-bank the drummer took a short route behind the cathedral. As he came closer he saw that a nest of little adobe houses were built like lean-tos against the sides of the church.

These little mud huts clinging humbly to the soaring walls of the great fane and the whole illuminated in the deep yellow of sunset formed a picture which arrested even the drummer. It drove away for a moment the permeating thought of the *señora*. It extinguished his desire and his sense of hurry in the timelessness of beauty.

Beyond him on his left lay the wide vacuity of the river. The terrane on which Strawbridge walked was high above the river and was grown with patches of thistles, cactus and a thin, harsh grass. Through this wound a number of paths leading to this or that little hut.

The scene was animated with a scattering of naked brown youngsters who played silently and seriously after the manner of Latin children. They almost blended with their background of sand and adobe.

As the drummer walked through this quaint place an old woman came out of a little shop with her apron full of charcoal. She hobbled along a path, evidently meaning to intercept the American. Her intention became so obvious that Strawbridge stopped and waited for her.

"Can I do anything for you, *vieja*?" he inquired, running a hand into his pocket.

The old creature crossed herself with her free hand.

"May the Holy Virgin guard you, *señor*!"

The sick man got out a centavo, but to his surprize the crone did not stretch out her palm.

"*Señor Americano*," she whispered, "when do I get my Josefa back?"

The question sounded so pointless that the salesman thought she must be slightly unbalanced.

"Your Josefa, *señora*?"

The old woman pointed with a trembling hand.

"The poor *joven* you sent to La Fortuna, *señor*."

The drummer looked at the old creature nonplused. She seemed to be rational; indeed she had shrewd, wrinkled eyes and a high-bridged, aristocratic nose. She might have been a kind of dowdy dowager.

"*I* sent a youth to La Fortuna, *señora*!"

The old woman glanced up at the yellow-green sky.

"Holy San Pablo! Has he forgot! Is it so little to him that he forgets my poor boy Josefa, the *dependiente* in Sol y Sombra

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whom he loaded with irons and hid away in La Fortuna!"

The drummer looked at the old woman with troubled surprize to find that she was connected with the unhappy clerk in Sol y Sombra. Indeed, he had almost forgot the incident of the little monkey-eyed clerk, or at least it no longer disturbed him.

The battle of San Geronimo had somehow cut a gap in his life, and all things antecedent to the battle seemed in a remote past. Now this old woman had abruptly crossed this gap and had bound one of the keenest indiscretions of his old life with his new. Somewhere under the black hulk of La Fortuna, which glowered against the sunset, Josefa still existed.

The drummer felt that thrill of discomfort which a sportsman feels when a quail flutters in his coat hours after it should have died. He stood looking at the old woman, hardly knowing what to say. Finally he asked—

"Are you Josefa's mother?"

"His grandmother, *señor.* He lived with me, but when he fell into misfortune I had to give up my house, and Father Benicio found me a place here in the cathedral to scrub the brasses. I live in the third *casa* yonder, under the transept."

She pointed it out and from her tone the little hut seemed part of her griefs.

She stood looking at Strawbridge expectantly, evidently waiting for him to do or say something. The drummer grew more and more uncomfortable. He put his hand irresolutely into his pocket and drew out some coins. He looked at them doubtfully and made a suggestive movement toward the crone. She held out an old hand, raw in places from her unaccustomed work in the cathedral.

"When do I get my boy back, *señor?*" she repeated in a low tone.

"*Señora*—I don't know."

"You do not know when you are going to sack La Fortuna?"

Her whisper was astonished.

"I—sack La Fortuna!"

"*Seguramente, señor;* Felipe said you had all your plans laid. He said you had men everywhere ready to leap upon Canalejos at a word from you; that you would set all the prisoners free and put the tyrants in their own dungeons. But he said you were an *Americano*, and when you gained power you would not oppress the people as General Miedo and General Fombombo did."

Strawbridge was annoyed and a little anxious at this continual bobbing up of the bull-fighter's gossip.

"Look here," he said, "Felipe is going to get me into serious trouble spreading that sort of rumor."

"Oh no, *señor;* the peons never did betray the *hombre* who comes to fight their battles. No one spoke a word when General Fombombo marched against Canalejos. He was in the city before General Miedo—" she nodded toward the *palacio*—"knew a breath of it. No one will speak against you.

"Felipe has arranged everything. The whole town will rise up when you lift your sword. I will be happy, *señor*, when you stand *him*—" another nod at the palace—"in front of the rifles."

Strawbridge was shocked at her ancient bloodthirstiness. And he saw that nothing he could say would shake her in her delusion. And why should he shake her? Why not let her draw any comfort she could from an imaginary revenge? He promised to do what he could for Josefa and started on for the *palacio*.

THAT evening Strawbridge did not sit with the *señora* on the piazza. Their plan to elope had made the lovers chary of being seen together.

The drummer sat in his room and from his window watched the vestiges of sunset darken into night. He was sick, and the reaction after all of his walking and talking and love-play with the *señora* left him weary and despondent.

Thoughts of Josefa and the old charwoman bedeviled him. Through his window he could see the dark reproach of La Fortuna blotting out the residual umber in the east. Somewhere in that pile the little monkey-eyed Josefa lay manacled because he, Thomas Strawbridge, had conceived a hardware display for Sol y Sombra.

The salesman got up and moved about his room in weary restlessness. He cursed the country in his thoughts. He recalled Rosales standing before the firing-squad; the little Austrian operator whom Saturnino had corrupted, the centaurism of General Fombombo. It was the country—there was something about this country

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that got a man. Then there insinuated itself into his reverie the fact that he himself was planning to elope with the dictator's wife.

Strawbridge's thinking stopped abruptly and he stood staring at nothingness with widened eyes. He did not want to yield to wickedness. He wanted to stay decent.

And even as he was thinking these things a profound justification arose in his mind. It was his duty to deliver an unhappy woman from such a mad, immoral land. It was his duty and his deepest desire. He had the widest license to protect her that any man could possess—he loved her.

But as to the others—there was something about this country that got a man.

XXII.

THE next morning Thomas Strawbridge awoke with a brisk feeling that some important and happy event was pressing into his life. The sight of his roll of canvas packed and ready to go, the bundle of cassava bread, gave substance to his mood.

He felt stronger than he had been since his sickness. No doubt the caresses of the Spanish girl had infused vigor into his big body. He sat up on the side of his bed, pushed his feet into *alpargatas* and then got up and went flapping into his bathroom.

He got out of his pajamas and walked carefully down the slippery steps of his marble bath, turned the key in the silver nozzle overhead and stood gratefully in the faintly cool shower. It was his first self-performed ablution since his sickness, and when he had finished he set about the ticklish experiment of toweling himself with the aid of his wounded hand. He managed a very light friction without pain, and this pleased him keenly. His big body was growing softly pinkish again.

Tonight he and the *señora* would embark on the most tinglingly romantic adventure of their lives. At the increasing thought of the woman his heart began to beat. She was only a little way from him at that moment, only a few doors distant.

He went back into his room and began touchy efforts to dress himself. He did his underclothes well enough, but his socks were troublesome because his feet were still faintly damp.

Suddenly through some compulsion he dropped this task midway, jabbed his feet into *alpargatas* again, stood up and looked out the window. He did not know what had prompted him; in the gray light he saw a slender nun's figure passing from the *palacio* to the cathedral.

The sight filled the drummer with an extraordinary turbulence. He made a step toward the window and called to her *sotto voce*. She did not hear, and he drew an intake of breath on the verge of calling more loudly; but the caution of lovers silenced him. After all, why should he call her?

He stood watching her, repressing the imperative which had moved him to attract her attention. He did not even know what he had meant to say. His queer excitement calmed a little and even amused him.

He pressed his face against the window-bars and watched her as far as he possibly could, until the ornamental evergreen with its tassels blurred and concealed her from his eyes. He turned back to his toilet with a faint sense of deprivation.

Only then did the drummer think definitely that the *señora* was going to early mass and confessional. In a few minutes she would enter that queer little double stall in the cathedral and would whisper through the aperture into the ear of a priest.

The thought brought him a queer pang, and that perhaps was the reason of his distress at her going. He had instinctively wanted her not to go. In the confessional Dolores would whisper every detail of the episode in the music-room; she would lay bare every nook and corner of her heart.

The thought of any other human being knowing what was in her heart filled him with a vague jealousy. The idea grew into a mysterious and painful emotion. He could not get rid of it. The priest would explore the *señora's* heart more intimately than he.

And he saw no end to such conditions. He could never get as close to Dolores as her spiritual adviser. Such a reservation filled him with a kind of despair. He felt that in the holiest places of her soul he must remain a stranger. The man's self-torture brought a slight sweat to his face.

He went back to his dressing but kept glancing through the window, watching for the girl's return. He recalled that he had set his watch with the *señora's*. He got it from under his pillow and looked at it.

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The hour was eleven minutes after five. In sixteen hours and forty-nine minutes he and Dolores would be out on the rapids in the night. It seemed to him as if everything were waiting for that hour to come. The whole mechanism of day and night tapered to this event. A little quiver went through him.

In the east the sun must have cut the horizon, for behind the cathedral and the prison spread a pale gold fan. From the top of the prison came the flash of a cannon dimly picked out, like the flare of a firefly against the light.

Two seconds later came the flat crash as if some power had delivered a terrific blow and had lapsed instantly into silence. It advertised the dictator's will over the llanos. The drummer looked at the prison against the east with his old feeling of dismay.

THE stir and rattle of early morning brushed away this unhappy impression. Came a tap at his door, and the griffe girl brought in his coffee. She still wore her air of suppressed but joyous excitement and presently volunteered the whispered information that the *señora* had not as yet returned from early mass.

"She is usually back by this time," she nodded.

"Wonder what's keeping her?" asked Strawbridge as naturally as he could.

"I do wonder," echoed the maid, turning with her silver urn in her hand to look through the window.

The drummer felt an impulse to talk to the girl about his coming adventure. It was clear that she knew all about it, but he decided regretfully not to. It would be imprudent.

The maid stood close to the window now, looking at an angle into the plaza. Suddenly she began jiggling up and down.

"Oh, there she is! I see her black gown coming through the shrubs!"

Strawbridge knew that he ought to remain sipping his coffee, but he jumped up and strode over to the griffe girl's side. The two stood with their heads almost together, getting glimpses of the black gown through the shrubbery. The little maid unconsciously caught and squeezed Strawbridge's arm.

"Oh, isn't she the sweetest, dearest *señora!* Oh, *señor*, isn't she lovely and beautiful and just too sweet!"

The little servant was caught up in a paroxysm of a woman's love for lovers. She might have been Strawbridge himself glowing over his sweetheart, or—perhaps what was a great deal truer—she was glowing toward Strawbridge through the vicarious love of her mistress. In the midst of it her spirits suddenly fell.

"*Ca!*" she pouted. "It's Father Benicio!"

Her disappointment was so intense that the drummer laughed. He patted her rubbery shoulder.

"Oh, well, that doesn't destroy the *señora* completely."

And he finished his thimbleful of coffee in good spirits.

The maid went out with the coffee things and left Strawbridge standing at the window with a feeling of well-being. The romance of how he would gain his wife moved him pleasantly. It reminded him somewhat of a film he had seen in Keokuk called "Maid in Mexico."

At the time he had thought such a romance impossible, and yet at the time he had vaguely hoped for some such thing to happen to him. And now because his own life had fallen into lines somewhat resembling that cheap melodrama, it profoundly increased his pleasure in this passing moment at the window. So American slapstick movies found a remote justification.

The drummer was brought out of his reverie by a rustling of skirts in the passageway and a tap at his door. His thoughts instantly warmed to the *señora*, and he called in a low tone for her to enter. He moved toward the door with a fancy to take her into his arms and kiss her.

When the door opened, Father Benicio entered. Then the American recalled that Dolores was still at the cathedral.

Strawbridge stood looking at the priest, rather curious as to what had brought him to his room. He offered a chair and chose one for himself. He pulled it around so he could sit looking out of the window. Then he drew his cigar-case and offered it. The father accepted one, rolled it gently between his thin fingers.

"How is your business, Señor Strawbridge?" he inquired casually.

The drummer was more surprized. This was the first time a Venezuelan ever had volunteered the topic of business. The

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salesman lighted a wax match and held it to his cigar.

"Why—so-so," he answered in a muffled voice out of the corner of his mouth.

And he got his cigar to going.

"Will you sell as many rifles as you had hoped?"

Strawbridge looked at the end of his weed to see if it was burning smoothly.

"Think not. You see, the capture of San Geronimo has given the general a large number of rifles. They're out of date, of course; but then—you know this country."

Father Benicio nodded paternally.

"A little behind the times in warfare as in everything else. However, Señor Strawbridge, if I can bring my influence to bear in any way to promote your interest I hope you will not hesitate to call on me."

The drummer was genuinely touched.

"Why, thanks, Father Benicio, I appreciate that."

The priest gave a rather bloodless smile.

"I am glad to assist you because, if you will allow me to say it, your sincerity of purpose deserves assistance. I have always admired the enterprise you North Americans exhibit. For instance, I can not think of any other man than a North American who would have the moral courage to put by every incentive to misuse his position for his own personal advancement and remain true to his employers."

The American blew out a puff of smoke, removed and looked at his cigar and said in a tone that varied by a hair from his normal hearty voice:

"That's a very nice compliment, father. I hope I am worthy of it."

"I am sure you are. You know there are so many temptations in this country into which a man can fall and forsake his business obligations."

The salesman drew thoughtfully at his cigar.

"Well—yes, probably so——"

Back of this by-play he felt a little uncomfortable with the suspicion that Dolores had told the priest of their proposed flight. If so, here was still another person in Canalejos who knew of it.

Father Benicio did not answer at once but sat upward half a minute gazing out into the plaza. This silence showed the priest did mean something very personal and intimate in his general remarks. Presently he began again:

"Your company sends you out at a great deal of expense, Señor Strawbridge. Your employers place high confidence in you. In fact, did you ever think that the commanding position of Anglo-Saxon commerce in the world is founded directly upon the devoted self-sacrifice of its agents—just such men as you? There is a moral solidarity among the English peoples, Señor Strawbridge, which I would like very well indeed to see in my own people."

The drummer looked at the priest in growing discomfort. He saw he was about to receive what traveling salesmen call a "bawling out." He knew the priest meant to "bawl him out" about Dolores. And he thought quickly what line of resistance to take.

In the mean time the father talked on smoothly and sympathetically:

"And, Señor Strawbridge, I am a priest. I am, I trust, a vicar of God to all mankind."

He crossed himself.

"And if I, as a priest, could help you over any little obstacle in your path I would be deeply pleased. If you could frankly discuss with me any little difficulty that may have come into your life—I mean ethical difficulty, some clash between your private desires, for instance, and the duty you owe to the company which sent you here——"

The drummer reddened at this very clear statement that the priest knew everything, and he answered in the rather flat tones of nascent irritation—

"Really, Father Benicio, there is no clash whatever between—er—anything I propose to do and my business duties."

"I am glad to hear you say that, my son?" but the sentence was an interrogation.

The drummer remained silent. He did not mean to discuss his affairs with the *señora*. He smoked stolidly and stared into the green and gold of the plaza. The early-morning sunshine gave it a tender glow. The cleric placed his unlighted cigar gently on the edge of the table and did not pick it up any more.

"Whom I am really thinking about, Señor Strawbridge, is my daughter, Dolores Avilon Fombombo."

THE drummer frowned slightly as if at some disagreeable flavor in his tobacco.

"Did she go and tell you everything?"

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"Naturally, *señor*. What else could she do?"

The drummer flung his head about and looked at the father.

"Good Lord, in a case like this——"

He broke off abruptly.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"*I*—nothing. I advised my daughter not to do this rash thing which you and she contemplate."

"Rash! After six years of insult and abuse!"

The priest bent his head gravely.

"*Sí, señor;* very rash and very wicked."

The big salesman straightened in his chair and looked at the cleric with outraged eyes.

"Wicked? How do you get that answer? Wicked to get rid of an empty marriage? Call that wicked? For Dolores to leave a man who shows he doesn't give a —— about her by every move he makes! Don't your reason tell you it would be a —— sight wickeder for her to remain in such a shameful connection with a man she detests?"

Father Benicio sat measuring the salesman with small, black eyes.

"Do you measure shame and honor and duty purely by personal pleasure one receives in obeying one's vows and obligations, Señor Strawbridge?"

"I'm not measuring anything; I'm stating facts."

"Does it cease to be your duty to attend to the business of your company merely because it would be pleasanter to run off with your customer's wife?"

The drummer lifted a hand and laid it flat on the table. "Look here, you can cut out that line of talk. She's not his wife. He's given her up.

"And besides, folks do marry to make life pleasanter on the whole. Yes, they do. You know they do.

"And if their life on the whole is unpleasanter after marriage than before, why then they've failed. They are not a going concern. They are not declaring any dividends, and the only thing to do is to quit—to get a divorce and quit."

Father Benicio sat reflecting on this to such an extent that Strawbridge thought he had convinced the priest by mere power of argument; however, at last the latter began again:

"But, Señor Strawbridge, there are some duties which you will always perform at great inconvenience and even pain to yourself. Those duties are not what you could call dividend-bearing duties. They will never pay you anything; they will always bring loss and pain; and yet—you do them."

"What sort of duties are you talking about?" asked the drummer suspiciously.

"Well—your business obligations to your house."

"But I tell you that isn't in this. The order's gone——"

"But if it were, and in the midst of your enterprise you were moved to desert your firm by some sharp and sudden passion, which, if you resisted, would cause you pain as long as your memory held its seat, still—would you not stand by your obligations? My son, when I look at you I believe you would."

The salesman started to speak, then paused to clear his throat.

"Look here, father, that's different. When it comes to business——"

"But business is only a duty, an obligation among other obligations."

"Yes, I know; but, you see, business depends on teamwork. A hundred, a thousand, a million other men are in the game with you. You can't lay down on your own crowd. Why, good Lord, if we all got to laying down when we liked, the whole commerce of America would go blooey!"

The priest smiled faintly and kindly.

"So you will stand by business cooperation at expense to yourself, but not social cooperation or spiritual cooperation?"

"About the last two—" the drummer shook a finger——"I don't know."

"Now let us see," said the priest evidently becoming more comfortable. "You owed your time to your company. Why did you not spend your time with the general trying to get an order instead of with the general's wife?"

"I did try to; but he wouldn't talk business, and that's the only kind of talk I can talk with a man. When I talk anything besides business or politics, it's got to be with a woman. Then when I saw how badly treated the *señora* was why any man with a spark of manhood——"

"Would assist her," finished the priest. "But do you think it fair or honest to your employers to give up their business to rectify wrongs which don't concern you? And was there as much suffering as you fancied? You found things here exactly as they had been for six years. It was a

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status quo, a method of existence; and then you came in and broke it all up. You persuaded a frail girl into the belief that happiness lies not in following the law of God, but in yielding to her impulses."

"Well, she will probably get happiness that way. Most women do. At least she'll have a chance. If a woman's first marriage is a failure, maybe she'll have better luck next time."

"But you say yourself one ought not to break business obligations."

"Sure not."

"Don't you think vows taken before God are as binding as a trade between an employer and a salesman?"

Strawbridge shook his shoulders in irritation.

"Oh, —— it, you twist everything to suit yourself. I don't know anything about this vow-to-God stuff. Business is business.

"As to marriage vows, we go before a justice of the peace at home, and we don't vow to God— Well now anyway, you come right down to it and don't you know business *is* the most important! You know not a thing in the world depends on your religion. Your house doesn't depend on it for their sales, your national trade balance stays right where it belongs no matter who's got religion and who hasn't. But all that sort of thing slumps the minute you neglect business.

"Now you'll excuse me for putting the plain dope to you. I know you are a priest and all that, and it's very seldom anybody talks plain horse sense to a preacher. But instead of anything depending on religion, you know and I know that if the business interests of America should neglect the church for just six months, why—blooey!"

Mr. Strawbridge snapped his fingers, waved his hands and nodded, then concluded in an ordinary tone—

"So it is very important that business comes first, then—other things."

The priest arose slowly, turned toward the door and then hesitated.

"Señor Strawbridge," he asked carefully, "what would you do if your order for rifles really did depend upon your going back to New York and leaving this unfortunate girl in peace?"

"Well, since the order has gone to the bowwows that is out of the question."

"But what would you do?"

"——, there wouldn't be but one thing to do. What makes you ask?"

He turned around and looked at the father.

The black-robed figure reached inside his cassock and drew out a legal-sized document. It was dignified with a big red Government seal. The priest opened it with a crisp rattling and spread it on the table before Strawbridge. It began with a sounding preamble:

By order of his Excellency, el General Adriano Caspiano Guillermo Herrara y Fombombo, Constitutional President of the Free and Independent State of Rio Negro, Señor Don Tomas Strawbridge, representative of an arms corporation located and doing business in the City of New York, State of New York, is hereby empowered to purchase from his said Company fifty thousand rifles of the caliber and specifications stated in the attached sheet of specifications, and a million and a quarter rounds of cartridges for said rifles. The same to be delivered f. o. b. at the steamer in the harbor of New York and to be billed to Senhor Dom Sebastiano Carupano in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, not later than six months from the date of this order.—JUAN DELGOA, *Minister of War.*

The drummer stared at the order with an open mouth. He licked his lips and looked up at the priest with a sick face. His voice came thickly—

"H-How came you with this, father?"

"I asked for it, my son."

"Does he—does the general know—everything?"

"I suppose so, Señor Strawbridge," said the priest dryly. "He has a fairly competent intelligence department, and you were right here in the *palacio*."

Strawbridge nodded numbly.

"Did—did you tell him why you wanted this?" he asked in a strained voice.

"The general has confidence in me, *señor*. I simply requested the order and received it. You yourself would have received it in due time if—you had been available."

The salesman's shoulders felt heavy. A perspiration broke out over his face.

"Well—after all—I can't accept this."

"What do you mean?"

"You kept it too long—I can't break my word to the *señora*."

"But it is a duty you owe your company."

"No; we made arrangements when I thought the trade was off. That finishes this."

He pushed the contract away.

The father came over to the big drummer

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and laid a translucent hand on his shoulder.

"You seem unhappy over this, Señor Strawbridge."

"My old man will think I double-crossed him—for a woman. He'll never believe the real facts."

"My son—" Father Benicio's voice softened— "Dolores is just as unhappy as you are. She feels just as keenly the vows which you do not comprehend as you feel the duties which she can not understand. She still says she will fly with you, even after I have reminded her of the holy commands of the Church; she will still fly with you because of her promise; but she is very unhappy about it."

The big drummer looked up.

"Is Dolores unhappy about—eloping?"

"Very."

"Why, good God, I don't want to make her unhappy!"

"I know you don't, my son. I think there is something very high and fine in both of you. Suppose we walk over and see Dolores and talk it over with her."

"Where to, father?"

"To the cathedral. Dolores is still in the cathedral. We can have privacy there."

The salesman got up unsteadily. The priest took his arm, and together the two men walked out of the *palacio*.

As they passed out of the eastern entrance, Strawbridge glanced down at the river. Just beneath the *palacio* a little fish-boat lay moored to the bank. It had been scrubbed and sanded until it gleamed in the sunshine as white as a bone.

AN INTERMEZZO of thoughts danced through the drummer's head as he accompanied the priest for his final talk with Dolores. He began to suspect that Father Benicio had used the order for the rifles quite as adroitly to separate him from the *señora* as he had used the nun's gown to withdraw the Spanish girl from the attentions of General Fombombo. It was the same kind of stratagem, the same kind of hateful cleverness in pulling just the right strings in human beings to move them toward his own ends.

As the two men moved on toward the cathedral the drummer looked at the thin, ascetic face of the father, the precise stock about his neck and his delicate fingers smoothing down the girdle of his cassock. The drummer studied him angrily, and made mental surges to shake loose from this order for rifles and recover his moral right to Dolores again.

Moreover, Strawbridge was uneasy about the approaching interview with the Spanish girl. He began thinking what he would say. He massed his arguments for elopement just as he always massed his selling-points before calling on a prospective buyer. He would bring her to his side by the verve and swing of his attack.

In the entrance of the cathedral the priest dipped his finger in the shell font and crossed himself. Then both men reduced their footfalls almost to silence and moved along the left aisle in front of a row of chapels. The drummer could half-see their crosses and passions in the dusky light of the church.

Here and there over the shadowy building knelt men and women at their devotions. The queer, pleasant smell of incense filled nave and aisles. Somewhere from the high altar came the monotone of a priest at his prayers.

The ensemble began to soften the drummer's mood. Involuntarily his thoughts began to throw out those filaments of sentiment toward the past, toward the future which religious buildings invariably evoke. It loosened his self-centeredness. It tended to strew his entity through time and eternity. It whispered to him that he had not always been what he was, nor would he always be.

The drummer's excited nerves felt this influence and he tried to resist it. He tried to brace himself against it. He swore mentally and told himself that he ought to stop where he was, that he ought to go no farther into this softening, deorienting building. He tried to re-collect his arguments for elopement.

Father Benicio was pointing.

"She is there in the chapel of the Last Supper."

The altar of the chapel of the Last Supper was a rich, dull sheen of gold from carpet to ceiling. On the left wall leading to this altar Strawbridge was dimly aware of a soft harmony of color. This was the great picture which illustrates the chapel, but the drummer did not observe this.

His whole attention was concentrated on a slender, black figure which knelt at the center of the huge gilded altar. The great gold background seemed to set forth her

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sadness and sweetness and trustfulness with an exquisite pathos.

Strawbridge felt a profound impulse to stoop and pick her up in his arms and bring all of her unhappinesses to an end. She had been so unhappy; her loveless marriage, her lonely life in the *palacio;* the savage and cruel *milieu* into which she had been cast; and now, just as love and opportunity had come into her life, for the Church, the Church which she had clung to for succor through all these years—that this Church should lift its hand and forbid her, that was too much; that was more than human nature could endure!

The drummer caught the priest's arm.

"Look here, Father Benicio," he whispered shakily, "this don't go! I'm going to take her out of here! You needn't talk: I don't give a —— what you say. Not a ——! Not a ——!"

He accented each oath with a grip in the tender place inside the priest's upper arm. Tears stung the drummer's eyes.

At the murmuring the girl turned. Her face was tremulous; and, seeing the priest, her poor composure gave way. She stretched out her arms.

"Oh, father, I—I can't do it! Oh, kind father, forgive me this one great and mortal sin and I will be the meanest servant of our Holy Church all the rest of my life! Good Father Benicio, you know I am no wife! Sweet father, do pray for me and let me go!"

She caught the priest's hand, kissing it over and over and wetting it with her tears.

"Listen here!" gulped Strawbridge. "Just go, Dolores! Why, —— —— it, just get up and go!"

The priest made a gesture.

"Listen, my children. Let us think seriously. You are passion-torn now; but have you not heard that he that loseth his life shall find it? Neither of you came into the world of your own will nor for your own pleasure. You came in God's good time to serve His ends for His glory."

The father crossed himself with his right hand while his left retained the fingers of the kneeling girl.

"My dear daughter Dolores, have I not explained to you time on time the depth and sweetness of renunciation? Only that which you renounce shall you preserve.

"We Spaniards, my child, have always lived by a great mystical apprehension of God through the spirit of renunciation. It is the life-breath of the greatest nation of people in the world.

"You, my daughter, are a Spanish woman and a Catholic communicant. It is impossible for you to act in any other way and gain happiness. The anguish which you feel this moment would be nothing to the lifelong fires of remorse which would burn in your heart.

"This moment is the parting of the ways in your life. It is impossible for you to do aught but remain pure and faithful and loyal."

The father paused a moment and continued:

"And this good youth who loves you, Dolores. He comes from a distant people, and the teachings of his people are very like our own. They instil into the hearts of their men to support each other in the market-place, just as it is the precept of us Spanish to support each other in the temple.

"But with him, as with us, this is a religion. It is the object of our renunciations. It is that for which we deny ourselves, for which we would give our strength, our patience, our sacrifices, our lives.

"If you cause this boy to break faith with his market-place, Dolores, you will have destroyed the man you worship. And, my dear son Tomas, if you take away from Dolores the holy sacraments which support her life, you can never have one unsullied caress from the woman you adore. How well I know it is not in your hearts to blast and destroy each other!"

Father Benicio paused, looking at the lovers with sad eyes; then he lifted the cross which hung about his neck and intoned—

"Now may the Holy Saints guard and direct you, my most dear children, and lead you into paths of final peace and happiness."

He made the sign of the cross above their heads, turned and moved silently from the chapel.

The drummer stood mute near the altar where the girl knelt. In his heart he acknowledged the rightness of the priest. He essayed some clumsy words to express what he felt.

"Dolores," he whispered, "do you think— Is what the father said— I don't mean myself, I mean you. It doesn't make any difference about me, but— Oh, Dolores——"

The girl was pallid but quite composed. She seemed to be staring into some far distance with her slightly unfocused eyes.

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"*Sí, señor,*" she whispered with a long exhalation. "Father Benicio is a very wise man."

Above the two on the left wall of the chapel shone the sad radiance of Michelena's "Last Supper." In the center of the picture stands the Christ, and behind him, seen through the archway of an open window, gleams the soft radiance of a moonlit landscape. The rising moon forms a halo for His head.

He is breaking the bread and giving it to his apostles to eat—to James and Jude, to Peter and Thomas, and to John, his beloved. And as he gives it he sayeth unto them—

"This is my body which ye eat, and this cup, which I give you to drink, is my blood."

XXIII

FATHER BENICIO had, as men say, convinced the head of Thomas Strawbridge but not his heart. As the drummer moved about his room in the *palacio*, packing his belongings, the thought of resigning Dolores, on whatever moral grounds, filled him with a sense of ghastly loss. The thing seemed impossible. It seemed impossible that Dolores was in an adjoining room and that presently he would go away and they should never see each other again.

He went on packing mechanically with a kind of shocked sensation at this impossible thing. His hands did their work with the meticulous care of a traveling salesman, a part of whose trade it is to pack well. He folded each tie, shirt, sock, precisely so, arranging them in his suitcases in smooth layers with their accessibility determined by their frequency of use.

At Father Benicio's suggestion, Strawbridge was moving his quarters from the *palacio* to the priest's house in the rear of the cathedral. It would save the lovers the pain and stress of seeing each other daily, so the priest explained; and Strawbridge was going. He would remain with the ecclesiastic until the flotilla arrived, and then he would embark for Rio with the gold and barter which had been conscripted in San Geronimo.

The griffe girl helped him in his packing. She assisted where his wounded hand failed. She knelt on his bags and pulled home their straps.

For some time the two worked silently; then the servant broke into sounds that resembled a low, quick laughter. The drummer looked at her with a feeling of dull reproach when he perceived that this was her method of sobbing. Her sympathy unmanned the convalescent. He touched her shoulder as she worked beside him and said in uncertain tones—

"Don't cry, *chica;* it's all right; it's for the best; it's all for the best——"

And his sympathy, reacting on her, drove the little creature into more uncontrollable outbursts than ever.

Half an hour later the porters came for his bags. He possessed five bags, and five men were conscripted to carry them. They filed into the *palacio*, stood for a moment looking at the room, at Strawbridge, at the bags, evidently speculating on the size of their gratuities. Then they hoisted the bags atop their dirty red caps and moved single file out through the corridor, down the transverse gallery, and so through the side entrance toward the plaza.

As one of the palace guards closed the door behind them, Strawbridge lingered a moment on the stoop looking back at it. His mood invested the door with something unusual. It seemed to have developed a personality of its own. It closed him out definitely. It shut in Dolores.

Its finality swamped an irrational little hope which until that moment Strawbridge was not conscious existed in his heart. Until that very moment he had hoped for some unexpected event to occur which would prevent his final departure. He did not know what he had expected, but something, somehow, a softening, an amelioration— The door of the *palacio* closed, and the bolts rattled shut.

The porters moved slowly away, single file through the sunshine. The drummer turned and followed them. He thought of the priest, of the priest's homily, but nevertheless as he walked along there grew in his mind a feeling of guilt, of some sort of basal unrighteousness.

He ought not to do this thing, walk away and leave Dolores like this. It was a kind of desertion. During his stay at the *palacio* both he and the girl had come to base their whole structure of future happiness upon their mutual relations. Now he was judging and condemning them both, the half judging the whole.

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And it was more than Dolores whom he was banning. The Spanish girl had come to imply to him a home. He was deserting that too.

It was no such home as the salesman had ever known. As a child and boy he had been reared in the hurlyburly of a middle-class home in Keokuk, wherein he found the bustle of a market-stall. It was a place of endless work and tasks and runnings to and fro. He had supposed homes to be by nature rattling and bustling until Dolores and her Latin surroundings brought him intimations of a place of quietude and sweetness such as he had never imagined.

Strawbridge had been, as they say, in love before. But his American sweethearts always suggested to him comrades in sport, partners at a dance, fellow enthusiasts over moving pictures and jazz; but they did not suggest quietude, or homes or babies. Indeed their hotly pursued pleasures made babies seem rather the absurd accidents of dual living than the end of matrimony.

With Dolores Fombombo Strawbridge felt the continual implication of motherhood. In the tenderer moments of his love he built a sort of romance home about this dark-haired woman who could read Spanish plays and talk with curious wisdom about marriage, life, pictures and plays. These were ancillary charms.

In the heart of his vision always shone a picture of Dolores with a baby at her bosom. It was this and all the long covenant of grandchildren and great-grandchildren which Strawbridge was abandoning as he passed through the side exit of the *palacio* and the doors shut to and the bolts shot fast after him.

The salesman walked slowly after his porters around the public gardens to the priest's house. He was a drummer again. Once more he had relapsed into the raw, nomadic life of a traveling salesman, with its hurry, its careless and casual acquaintances, its mechanical optimism, its worn jests, its empty routine, its devastating dulness and its petty obscenities.

In point of fact he was a wealthy drummer, one who at a lucky stroke had sold a large order and had gained a swollen commission. He was rich enough now to buy the home and the motor and the woman that he had described to Dolores——

TO BE CONCLUDED

CHARMS AND IDOLS OF WEST AFRICA

by Thomas Samson Miller

BOOKS might be written about the charms and idols of the Niger. Charms are worn to ward off sickness, or evil magic, or accident; to ensure good hunting or fishing; for the birth of a baby boy; whilst all the women wear charms against the birth of twins, for that is bad *Ju-Ju*.

These charms have about the same relation to superstition as the words "bread and butter" which the young lady you are escorting insists on your saying, if perchance you allow some one to walk between you.

Contrary to the general notion, idols are not worshiped. The images represent only the Idea. They may be symbolical of a god, or of an ancestor, but they are not the gods and ancestors themselves.

The simple black needs a material reminder, must have something before his eyes, an object, not to pray *To*, but to pray *Through*. When the God of Thunder, or the God of War, or the Great Spirit, is invoked, and lured from the bush, to dance in the village, it is not an idol that comes forth, but a symbolical shape animated by a hidden man. Symbolism is the key-note of West African religions.

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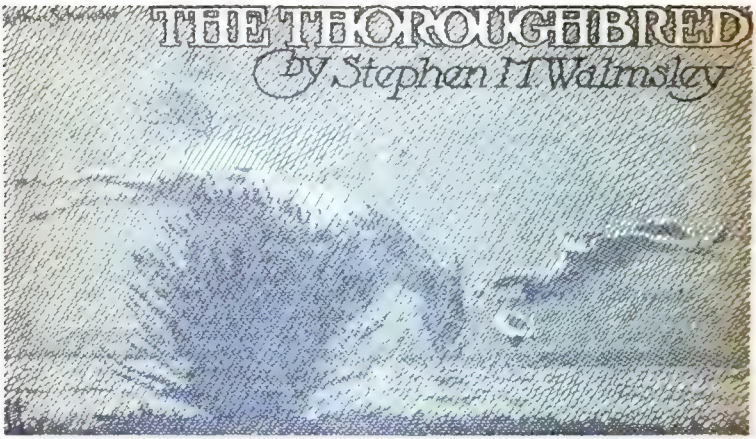

JIM ATWOOD had his own ideas about handling horses. He began to acquire them the first day, when, as a youngster in his little overalls and jumper, he climbed to the top of the corral fence and watched the wranglers and the "buster" working on the frightened horses which had been driven in from the range.

His eyes grew big at the sight of the milling, frantic animals that raced and whirled and dodged in the yellow dust, crowding each other against the heavy posts in a vain endeavor to elude the writhing ropes that settled with such deadly accuracy about their necks and feet. He found, without realizing it, that his sympathy was with the horses and not with the lanky, quick-moving men. He winked hard to keep back the tears at the sight of a buckskin pony, rearing back against the pull of a rawhide rope, eyes bulging, tongue protruding.

Before the afternoon was half-gone he had had enough and he climbed down from his perch to where Pedro, the broken-down cow pony which was his own, dozed in the glaring sunlight.

"It ain't right to do a hoss that-a-way, Pedro!" he muttered, as he stroked the pony's nose.

Pedro opened one eye and closed it again.

Jimmy climbed into the big saddle with its absurdly short stirrups, helping himself upward by means of the bottom rail of the corral fence and Pedro's scraggly mane, and rode back to the ranch house, Pedro choosing the gait.

Jimmy's mother was dead and his father had little time except for the affairs of the ranch. The men ignored him or gave laughing replies to his solemn questions and the boy grew up in the habit of keeping his thoughts to himself. He never left the ranch except for the rare trips to the little town where the wagon went for supplies and mail. His schooling was limited to irregular sessions at the little district school house. Horses were his one interest and before he was half-grown, he had acquired a quiet knack with them which even Lon Waters, the big ranch foreman, admitted. But he knew only what he learned from the men. A horse was something to be conquered, used when needed and then left to look after himself. He found men who were fond of horses, men who even loved individual horses, men who petted and boasted of their horses, men who would fight for them at the drop of the hat. But towards horses in general, their attitudes were much the same.

But Jimmy didn't see it that way. To him, every horse was an individual, to be treated according to his own peculiarities. He wondered why no one took more pains about feeding them, or providing shelter, or looking after them when they were sick.

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But no one did, unless it looked as if the horse were going to die, and Jimmie knew no other way.

WHEN Jimmy was seventeen, things began to get bad along the border. His father and the neighboring ranchers lost more stock than usual and fence riders who went out alone, sometimes failed to return. Strange stories began to filter in of happenings south of the River and then rumors that troops were coming to help watch the border. Jimmy had never seen a soldier.

Late one afternoon, a troop of cavalry appeared and went into camp near the ranch house. Jimmy hurried over and watched them, wide-eyed. The day had been hot and the march long. Men and horses were dust-covered and weary. Under like conditions, Jimmy or any of the men he knew, would have jerked off saddle and bridle and turned the horses loose, with a slap on the rump. But the troopers didn't and Jimmy marveled. They moved quietly into line and dismounted. Then they removed the heavily-packed saddles, leaving the blankets in place so that the tender backs would cool slowly, and led the horses to water.

When they returned, a picket-line had been stretched and the horses were tied up. Then the men dug their curry-combs and brushes from their saddle-bags and began grooming the dusty animals. The horseshoer and farrier walked up and down the line looking for a loose shoe or a sore back. Nothing was overlooked.

Jimmy forgot that darkness was falling and the supper hour past. Here was something new, something he felt was as it should be.

In a half-hour the grooming was finished. The dust and sweat were gone from shining coats. Then the grain-filled nose bags were adjusted and the men hurried off to their own suppers. Jimmy stood in the half-darkness, listening to the contented munching of the refreshed horses. At last he wandered homeward, muttering to himself—

"I aim to treat *my* hosses that-a-way."

ON HIS eighteenth birthday, Jimmy went to his father.

"I'm goin' to enlist in the army, Dad!"

His father looked at him for some time before he answered:

"All right, son. I reckon you're old enough to know your own mind and look out fer yourse'f. Maybe it'll do you good to see the world a little. Come back when you git ready. You know this ranch is goin' to belong to you some day."

"I'll be back, Dad!" Jimmy promised.

JIMMY learned a lot during his three years in the cavalry. It disgusted him mightily when the sergeant told him he'd have to learn to ride, but his first half-hour on a roughly-trotting horse showed him that the sergeant was right. He missed the gentle running walk of his own cow pony and the rocking lope he was so accustomed to. But he had come to learn and learn he did.

"That recruit Atwood's a good 'un," said the first sergeant to the troop commander. "He ain't no stranger to a horse and he takes to a curry-comb like a duck to water."

The weeks and months passed. Jimmy's troop was moved from the border to a comfortable army post and back again. The boy learned the tricks of field and parade. He could turn himself out for guard mount in a way that never failed to catch the adjutant's eye and he could find the driest spot on which to pitch his shelter tent. But mostly he learned about horses.

He found that there were other ways of breaking a horse besides choking him with a rawhide rope and ripping him open with six-inch spurs. He decided that a sixty-pound stock saddle, no matter how useful in roping a steer, was not all it might be from the horse's standpoint. He learned that both horse and rider must arrive at a compromise concerning the comfort of each other.

THEN the three years were gone and Jimmy went back to the ranch with his sergeant's chevrons in his pocket and a brand new pigskin saddle that cost him two months' pay and brought forth howls of laughter because of its diminutive size. But their laughter didn't bother Jimmy. One of the things he had learned in the army, was how to be laughed at. He took up his work at home and the saddle rested on a rack in his bedroom. He knew its limitations. There was no horn around which to snub a rope.

But his ideas remained fixed. The first night when he came in after a long day in

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the saddle, he watered his pony, tied him to the corral fence and hunted up his currycomb and brush. It was something of a struggle at first as the pony regarded with suspicion any such unusual procedure. In fact, not another man on the ranch could have done the trick without the aid of the tie ropes. But Jimmy had a way with him and in a few moments the cayuse was leaning appreciatively against the strokes of the stiff brush.

Before Jimmy had finished his task, Lon Waters came slouching by. He stopped and regarded Jimmy with amazement and suspicion.

"What yuh doin'? Tryin' tuh start somethin'?" he sneered.

Jimmy grinned.

"Sure! Got it most finished, too!"

Lon came a step nearer.

"Look here, young feller. I reckin we know how tuh take keer of our hosses and we ain't lookin' fer no one tuh start any new-fangled idees. I s'pose you'd like tuh see the whole gang of us out here babyin' a lot of spavined cayuses."

Jim cleaned his currycomb against the corral fence and then faced the foreman.

"What's the matter, Lon? I haven't said nothin' 'bout your groomin' your hoss, have I? I can't see that it's any of your business if I want to groom mine. He's my hoss, you know."

Waters growled something under his breath and passed on. Jim finished his job.

The following evening when Jim groomed his pony, he was surrounded by the entire force of punchers.

"Yuh ain't breshed his teeth yet, Jimmie!'

"Make it a shave, haircut an' shampoo!"

"Don't let 'im fergit his prayers when yuh tuck him in!"

But it didn't bother Jim and he rejoiced at the way his pony picked up in appearance under his ministrations. He was a good pony, as ponies go. But Jim longed for a horse, such a horse as his captain had ridden; fifteen-three and thoroughbred from the tips of his nervous ears to his dainty, polished hoofs. A horse that could take a four-foot gate in his stride and finish a day's march with head and tail up.

"I UNDERSTAND you and Lon have been disagreein' about how we ought to take care of our hosses," remarked Jim's father, one evening after Li, the Chinese cook, had cleared away the supper dishes.

"We don't agree and that's a fact," replied Jim, "But he's the one that has been doin' the talkin'. I haven't tried to force my idees on any one."

"Well, boy," said his father slowly, "Lon's worked for me for a long time, ever since you was a little shaver. He's foreman of this ranch and what he says goes. I hope I won't hear any more of this."

"All right, Dad. You won't hear any more of it from me. But you haven't any objection to my lookin' after my pony the way I want to, have you?"

"Not so long as you don't interfere with Lon."

A month passed and Jim was not disturbed.

One afternoon, as Jim and his father sat on the low veranda, Lon came up and seated himself on the steps.

"Reckin we'd better be gettin' up some more hosses, Mister Atwood. Our stock's gettin' a little low and we'll need a lot this fall. Buck Weaver's over at Haney's place bustin' a bunch fer him an' he says he'll be finished up in a few days. He'll be glad tuh come over here. I was out in the east pasture, yistiday, lookin' over a bunch of three-year-olds an' we kin get all we need outa that lot.

"I seen that bay colt outa that ol' broken-down mare that feller left here, three, four years ago. He said she was with foal when he left her. Claimed she was a thor'bred and the colt looks it. Weedy as the ——. Ain't got no bone under her a-tall. Don't look tuh me like' she's wuth foolin' with. She can run like the ——, tho. We ain't never branded her 'cause it was too dern much trouble tuh ketch her."

Jim pricked up his ears.

"All right, Lon," replied Mr. Atwood, "Whenever you're ready, go ahead."

Lon rose and slouched away.

Buck Weaver arrived with his heavy saddle, fitted with extra large bucking rolls and the horses were rounded up and driven into the corral, the bay colt among them.

Jim picked her out at once, from his perch on the high corral fence, and his eyes brightened. She was thin and her coat was dull, but there was no hiding her long, clean lines and finely-shaped head.

Jim had refused to help with the breaking.

"You're doing this your way, Lon, an'

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it's none of my business," he had said, "But its not my way. You've got plenty of men to help you, so you'll have to count me out."

But now that he had seen the bay colt, it was his business. He watched the wranglers as they picked out the horses, one by one, roped and threw them, then blindfolded them, cinched on the heavy saddle and forced a bit between their teeth. When they had finished, Buck Weaver would stroll nonchalantly to the blinded, trembling animal, swing into the saddle and give the signal to remove the blind and turn it loose. A moment's pause, a glimpse of a white eye-ball and then a whirlwind of bucking, twisting, rearing horseflesh, with Buck atop, his sinewy body swaying easily to meet every contortion, his heavy quirt rising and falling, his bloody spurs thrust home.

In a few moments it would be over and the conquered pony would come to a halt, dripping sweat and foam, fore feet braced awkwardly to keep it from falling, tongue lolling. Another horse broken.

Jim sickened at the sight, but he dared not leave. He had made up his mind to save the bay colt. He hoped she might be left among those to be broken the following day and that he could get her out of the corral at night without forcing the issue. But he must stay until the work was finished.

As horse after horse was cut out, his hopes rose, but at last he turned from watching a pony that had fought harder than usual and saw the colt standing alone in the corner of the corral, facing a wrangler who was working his way towards her, his open loop trailing behind him.

The colt watched him come. Her ancestors, since the days of the black desert tents, had known men and loved them, and there was more of curiousity than fear in her great, brown eyes. Her delicate ears twitched and her velvet nostrils quivered. Then, like the uncoiling of a snake, the rope whirled outward and settled about her graceful neck. At the touch of it, her eyes widened and she threw herself backwards, twisting and lunging. The noose tightened. Fear gave way to panic and she went mad.

Jim sprang from the fence and raced across the dusty corral. With one shove, he sent the wrangler spinning and with a snap of his wrist, loosened the noose. The colt paused. Jim flipped the rope again and the noose came away. The colt was free.

"What the —— yuh doin'?" came an angry voice from behind him and Jim turned to face Lon Waters.

"I want that colt for myself, Lon, and I want to handle her my own way. I heard you tell my father that she's no good so I can't see that you ought to care what I do with her. I'll ask my father if I can't have her."

Lon's face was livid.

"Goin' tuh run to your daddy, eh! Well, lemme tell yuh somethin', young feller. I'm handlin' these hosses an' what I says goes. We'll take keer of that colt same's we take keer of the others. You keep yore hands off."

Jim's body stiffened.

"Hold on, Lon! You've known me ever since I was knee-high to a horned toad and you ain't never seen me run to my daddy fer an'thin' yet. An' I ain't goin' to do it now. I'm not lookin' fer trouble with you ner any one else, but there ain't none of you goin' to put a rope on that colt, an' that goes. You squealed to my father once 'cause you didn't like what I was doin' an' I 'spose you'll do it again, but I'll take a chance on his backing me up this time. Now what yuh goin' to do?"

The two men faced each other in silence. Lon's angry gaze measured Jim's trim, wiry figure, balanced alertly.

"We'll see about this!" he growled and turned away.

The afternoon's work went on but the bay colt was not molested.

When the last man had left the corral, Jim slipped inside and worked his way towards the colt. But she had learned her lesson. Whenever he approached, she whirled and raced around the corral, snorting with fear. Jim followed her quietly and patiently but he could not get near her and it was nearly dark before he succeeded in cutting her out of the herd and driving her into a smaller corral that adjoined the large one. He placed a bucket of water inside the fence, threw down an armful of hay and left her for the night.

He spent the following day in the small corral. He walked quietly about, paying no attention to the colt, or squatted near the fence talking to her in an even voice. He tried to coax her with some ears of corn but, as she had never tasted corn, she refused to be tempted. Late in the afternoon he left the corn lying on the ground and went to the blacksmith shop. He built

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a fire in the forge and began working some pieces of strap iron into a cavesson. When it was finished he padded it carefully with some pieces of felt cut from a collar pad and rigged a headstall from an old bridle.

The next morning he went back to the corral. The colt had eaten the corn and when he brought more, she showed interest. Jim moved slowly and deliberately. He was careful not to make a sudden move of any sort. Before the morning was over, the colt would almost take the ear of corn from his outstretched hand. But not quite. Her suspicions always got the better of her at the last moment. Jim was not discouraged. He followed her doggedly, ignoring her nervous whirling and prancing. At last he was rewarded. The colt came nearer, step by step, then stretched her long neck and grasped the ear of corn in her teeth. With a fling of her head, she sprang backward, attempting to jerk the corn from Jim's grasp. But Jim had expected this. He made no attempt to draw it back, but held it firmly and it was the colt's teeth that lost the grip. After a moment she came back, disappointed. This time she took a firmer grip and almost pulled Jim off his feet when she sprang away. But Jim held fast and again the colt let go. Now she was thinking of the corn and forgetting Jim, which was what he wanted.

The game went on until the colt gave up trying to jerk the corn from Jim's hand and began to nibble the kernels from the cob as he held it. He let her eat until her lips almost touched his fingers and then released the ear. It dropped to the ground at his feet and the colt sprang back as it fell. But Jim did not move and presently she came and picked it from the dust.

He could have leaned and touched her head, but he didn't. He got another ear of corn and began again. This time he did not extend his arm but held the corn close to his body so that the colt's velvet muzzle was almost against his breast as she nibbled.

Slowly, he moved his free hand upward from his side and grasped the ear of corn, first with one hand and then with the other. As he moved his hands back and forth, he let them brush the colt's nose, ever so lightly. Then he let one of them rest, for an instant, above her nostrils and slide upward towards her forehead. That was too much. The colt snorted and whirled away. But she came back and Jim began again, this time with better success. Before long she ceased to mind his petting.

The following day, when he entered the corral, he walked directly to where she stood. She watched him come, ears pointed, but made no move to escape and accepted eagerly, the corn which he gave her. Jim continued the petting, working his hand quietly along her neck and withers. Her nervousness was fast disappearing.

From then on, Jim's progress was rapid. She had lost her fear of him and her confidence in him was growing. It was then that he brought the cavesson with a long lead-rope attached. The colt eyed it suspiciously, but Jim held it in his hand and let her smell it until she was reassured. Then, still holding it in his hand, he rubbed it gently along her cheek and neck and finally slipped the nose band over her muzzle. The head-stall gave him more trouble as the touch on her ears was almost more than she could stand. But at last it was on and although the colt fretted and tossed her head, she did not attempt to break away.

Jim let her fret until she realized that the thing did not hurt her. Then he stepped back and gave a gentle tug on the lead rope. The colt resisted and gave signs of bolting. Jim released the pressure for a moment and then reapplied it. Again the colt resisted but there was a gentle authority about the padded grip on her nose that made her obey. She took a step forward. Jim turned his back to her and walked away, tugging gently at the rope. The colt followed.

That was the beginning. Thereafter, for an hour, two hours, three hours a day, Jim worked the colt with the cavesson and the long line. He taught her to start and stop, walking around him at the end of the rope, sometimes in small circles, sometimes in large ones, guiding her with his voice and a flip of the rope. From a walk, he worked her into a trot and then into an easy canter. At times she whirled and attempted to break away, but the insistent tug of Jim's weight on the long line and his quiet voice brought her back.

For a few days the men of the ranch gathered at the corral fence to watch and offer advice, but the performance was too slow for them and before long they left Jim to his own affairs. Only Lon Waters refused to forget what was taking place and never lost an opportunity to deride the colt

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and Jim's method. Jim took it good-naturedly.

"Never mind, Lon! I'll have a hoss when I've finished with her."

"Hoss, ——! You'll never make a hoss outa her. She's nothin' but a weed and ain't wuth her keep. A runty yearlin' 'ud jerk her off her pins in one jump."

Jim laughed.

"I guess you're right there, Lon. But I don't aim to make a cow pony out of her. I reckin I can afford to keep her 'round here without makin' her pay her way. Thor'bred hosses, Lon, is somethin' you don't know nothing about. Some day that mare'll show you a heart that you didn't know was in a hoss."

Lon grunted.

The colt's education went on until Jim decided she was ready for the saddle. He went to his bedroom and took the shiny pigskin from its rack. As he walked towards the corral, carrying the saddle across his arm, one of the men saw him and a shout went up. The idea of breaking a horse with an eight pound saddle was too much. By the time Jim reached the corral, every man on the place was on hand to watch.

"Jest as well go on back, boys!" Jim called, "yuh ain't goin' to see much."

He repeated what he had done with the cavesson and let the colt smell the saddle until she was thoroughly reassured. Then he rubbed it slowly along her neck and slipped it into place behind her withers. As it settled into place, the colt jumped from under it. But Jim had expected that and was holding the saddle so that it did not fall to the ground, or strike her body as she jumped.

He tried it again and this time the colt let it stay, only turning her head to look at it. Jim lowered the girth and rubbing it against her barrel, drew it gently into place and buckled it. Then he led the colt about the corral and finally turned her loose, still saddled. She made no effort to get rid of the saddle. After a while, Jim hung the light metal stirrups in place and let them dangle against the colt's sides, nor did she resent that.

Then came the moment which the men on the fence had been waiting for. Jim stood beside the colt and holding the lead rope in his hand, placed his foot in the stirrup. Holding the saddle with both hands, he gradually put his weight on the tread and raised himself from the ground. The colt sidled away uneasily. Jim put his foot back on the ground. After a moment, he tried again. The colt did not move. Still standing in the stirrup, he leaned his weight across the colt's back and when she did not object, eased his right leg across her back and settled himself, ever so gently, into the saddle.

As the colt felt his weight in the saddle, she flinched a little but Jim spoke to her and she did not move. He sat quiet for a moment and then dismounted as carefully as he had mounted. He mounted again and this time he urged the colt forward as he had done when she was at the end of the lead rope. She obeyed and walked quietly forward, stopping and starting at his command.

"——!" ejaculated one of the men. "This ain't no fun. I'm goin'!"

THE colt was broken.

Under Jim's care her coat grew sleek and shiny and her long legs and body filled out and rounded. Jim spent his spare time and money arranging for her comfort and she, in turn, followed him like a dog and came trotting at his whistle, ears pointed and muzzle extended for the tidbit which she never failed to receive. They went for long gallops in the twilight, after the day's work was over, and Jim thrilled to the long swing of her stride and the easy play of her great muscles. She was the horse he had dreamed of. But she was a luxury and Lon Waters never ceased to complain of her idleness.

One evening, as Jim was preparing for a gallop, Lon called to him from the corral.

"Lemme ride her, Jim! I'd like tuh see how she travels."

Jim shook his head.

"Nothin' doin' Lon, you'n me don't ride the same. She's used tuh me an' my way of handlin' her. I aim tuh make a one man horse of her."

He pressed the mare's shining sides with his legs and she sprang away.

Lon watched the two with a scowl.

Jim spent the next day on the range. Upon his return, he went to the little stable which he had built for the mare. As he entered the dim interior he heard her jump to the far corner of the hall. He stopped. That was not her usual way of greeting him. He spoke to her and she stood still, but when he put his hand on her

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he felt her tremble. As he ran his hand along her back her coat felt rough and matted. Wondering, he led her outside, where the light was better, and looked her over. She was gray with dried sweat and her back bore the marks of a saddle, much larger than the small one which Jim used. He looked closer. He flanks were ripped in long streaks and the hair was matted with blood. He examined her mouth and saw that her tongue and lips were cut.

A wave of anger flooded the boy, but gave way in a moment to pity and he set about caring for the frightened animal.

When he had finished, he went to his room and changed his riding boots for a pair of light, soft-soled shoes. He took off his jumper and tightened his belt. Then he set out to find Waters. He met him returning from the corral, where the blacksmith shop hid them from the ranch house.

"You bin ridin' my mare, Lon?"

"If yuh mean that bay mare, yes! Fur's I know, she ain't no different from the rest of the stock on this ranch, an' I ride any of 'em I want to. I rode her like she ought tuh be rode, too."

Jim saw red. Like a flash, his right hand whipped out in a blind swing that caught the larger man full in the face. Lon staggered backwards, recovered himself and rushed at the boy. In that instant, Jim's blind anger vanished. He had learned boxing in the barracks and he had not forgotten.

He met the rush with a straight left jab that rocked the big man on his heels and before Lon could recover, swung his right fist to his jaw. Lon went down, but was on his feet in a moment, coming in again. This time he was more cautious and his long arms swung menacingly from his stooped shoulders

This was no boxing match. It was a fight and Jim knew that nothing was barred. He had no desire to get himself locked inside those arms. He began to work fast, in and out, feinting, jabbing, ducking. His blows rained on the big man's face but he kept coming. Then Jim misjudged his distance. Lon lunged forward and the boy felt his arms close about his body. He let himself go limp and, like a flash, worked the heel of his hand under Lon's nose, his fingers pressing the man's forehead. With all his force, he pushed upward. Lon's head went back and his grip slackened. Jim stepped back until his weight rested on his right foot and then stepped in again, throwing his body behind his right fist. The blow went home, clean to the man's jaw. It was more than even his huge frame could stand. His knees gave way and he slumped to the ground. The fight was over.

Jim waited until Lon opened his eyes.

"Had enough?" he asked.

Lon looked about him for a moment, dazedly, and then nodded.

"All right," continued Jim. "You understand now, don't you, that that mare is mine? You knew it all the time, but you're tryin' to take out on her something you've got against me—an' there ain't no more low-down trick in the world. But I've got your number now and I'm watchin' yuh. One more crooked move an' you or me gets off this ranch—an' I don't think it'll be me. Sabe?"

A YEAR went by and the mare was no longer a colt. The Spring rains came, heavier than usual, and the lightning played in long splashes across the leaden skies. The arroyas filled with yellow floods and overflowed their banks.

It was nearly midnight when Jim and his father were awakened by some one pounding on the door. It was Lon Waters.

"I wanta use the telephone, Mister Atwood," he said, his voice hoarse with fear. "I gotta get hold of the doctor. We wasn't expectin' the baby fer a week yet, but somethin's gone wrong an' the missus is awful bad off."

"Why, Lon, the telephone's been out fer two days. I reckon the lightnin' has got into it. We can't raise a soul."

Lon stopped as though struck in the face.

"Go down to the shed and get out the Ford," continued Mr. Atwood. "That will be the quickest way and you can bring the doctor back with you."

Lon shook his head.

"No use, Mr. Atwood!" he said, hopelessly. "There ain't a car in the world could get through tonight. Every arroya's flooded and the road's washed out a half dozen places. God! What'll I do?"

"Nothin' for it but to take a horse," replied Jim's father. "There's two or three in the corral, ain't there?"

"What could a horse do?" exclaimed Lon, frantically. "We gotta have the doctor here in three, four hours an' it's twenty miles to town. He could make it out here

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in that time if he started right away, but not if he has to wait till some one gits in from here."

"I'll take the bay mare and go, Lon," interrupted Jim. "She'll make it."

"Do yuh think she can?" Lon's eyes were beseeching.

The old quarrel was forgotten.

Jim pulled on his lightest boots, snatched his saddle from its rack, and ran to the shed where the mare was stabled. The rain had ceased and a few stars lightened the gloom. He saddled hurriedly and led the mare out. Lon was waiting for him and as he swung into the saddle, he reached up and grasped his hand in a vise-like grip.

"Do your best, boy! Death's ridin' herd on yuh tonight an' there's two lives tuh think of."

Jim returned the grip and urged the mare forward. For five minutes he held her to a walk, then, as her legs warmed to the work, pushed her into a trot and then a long, swinging gallop. The road was muddy and rutted so he held her to the side where the scant grass, as yet undisturbed, offered a better footing.

The mare seemed to sense that something unusual was at stake and settled herself to her work. Her nervous ears flickered forward and back and she mouthed the snaffle impatiently. Mile after mile she flung the sticky mud behind her in showers. At the first flooded arroya she paused, but Jim spoke to her and she floundered through the belly-deep torrent and scrambled up the opposite bank, handy as a cat. In one leap, she was back in her stride.

An hour and a half passed and Jim knew there were only a few more miles to go. The mare was beginning to show the effects of the heavy going. The sky had clouded over again and it was very dark. Suddenly Jim felt the mare's fore-quarters give way and he was flung over her head. She had stepped in a hole.

Jim lay still long enough to recover the breath which had been knocked from his body and then got up. He looked about in the darkness for the mare. She was standing, not a dozen paces away, raising and lowering one forefoot. Jim's heart sank. Miles to go and a lame horse. He went up to her and ran his fingers over the already swelling fetlock. She winced at his touch. He hesitated a moment and then swung himself into the saddle. The mare hobbled forward. Jim pushed her into a limping gallop.

"I hate to do this, old girl! But it can't be helped. We've got to make it."

As the mare became accustomed to the pain of the wrenched tendon, her limp decreased, but the spring was gone from her stride and she leaned on the bit. Jim talked to her and caressed her as she galloped.

And so they came to the little town. Jim rode to the doctor's house and routed him out.

"I'll be with you in a minute, Jim!" the doctor called from his bedroom window.

Jim waited, walking the sweating horse back and forth.

In a few moments the doctor appeared. Jim explained his mission.

"Wait till I get my car out!" interrupted the doctor. "I'll be on my way in a minute."

"Hold on, Doc! That car won't do you any good tonight. You'd never even get out of town! Get your hoss!"

"Why, Jim, I haven't a horse. I've had no use for him since I got the car and I sold him a month or two ago."

Jim groaned.

"No hoss! Good God! How you goin' to get out to the ranch?"

The two men stood silent a moment, then Jim continued:

"All right, Doc., you'll have to take mine. She's lame and she's done twenty miles already, but there ain't no other way."

The doctor swung his case of instruments over his shoulder and climbed into the saddle.

"You used to have the reputation of being a good man with a hoss, Doc. Do your best tonight. Help her along a little and she'll take you home or die tryin'."

Jim's voice was husky. He threw his arms around the mare's head and drew her muzzle against his breast.

"Take him home, girl! We're countin' on you."

THE leaden dawn was creeping over the eastern prairie and in the little adobe house a woman was fighting the age-long struggle for her life and that of another. In the dim light, the anxious watchers spied a speck that came steadily nearer. It was the mud-spattered mare and her weary rider. The mare's long neck was extended and her head swung low. Her eyes were rimmed with blood. Her chest and shoulders were flecked with foam. Her wide-spread nostrils sucked in the air

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in greedy gulps. But her long, swinging stride never faltered.

Eager hands lifted the exhausted doctor from the saddle and hurried him away. The mare stood motionless for a moment, then flung up her finely chiseled head, as if in a last gesture of victory. Her knees crumpled and she sank to the ground with a long, whistling sigh. Her great heart had broken.

Lon Waters stood beside her and bared his head to the drizzling rain. Unheeded tears ran down his cheeks.

"I shore done yuh wrong!" he muttered, leaning over to stroke the silky ears. "A thor'bred hoss! Yes, a thor'bred if they ever was one!"

Author of "Stake-Bound," "The Black Channel" etc.

JOE DAVIS was the name of this shabby little runt with the wandering heel and the bulldog jaw, who stood in the meager shelter of the water-tank waiting for a westbound train. Joe saw some tiny white objects dropping earthward very gently and very quietly out of the dark December sky. Skeptically he thrust forth a grimy palm and captured a couple of the descending particles, which presently resolved into minute bodies of water. Joe's unshaven features wrinkled into a broad grin.

"Now ain't dat de limit?" he asked himself plaintively. "Atter me playin' de Sout' fur de poipose of duckin' de snowballs, here I runs right inta dem. I sure am a Jonah wit' bells on."

The fact was incontestable. Snow was falling in southwestern Texas within an hour's ride of the Rio Grande. It was the first snow that the little man had seen in ten years excepting on the peaks of distant Sierras. The occurrence gave him an odd thrill.

"Now I wunner," he mused, "how it 'd look wit' snow all over de groun' again, like it usta be in de Nort' w'en I wuz a kid? Crismus an' toikey an' de ol' man scoffin' a can of lager'n ale an' de ol' lady smilin' at ev'rybuddy troo her specs——"

The grin faded slowly from the hobo's face, and he rubbed his cold fingers in solemn reflection over the growth of stubble on his chin. His father was long since dead. But his mother? He had not seen her in ten years, and how very swiftly those years had flown! He had squandered them in a series of ceaseless ramblings over the broad Union *via* freight train and blind baggage, migrating northward in Springtime and, like the birds, spurning the North in advance of the first October gale. Those years had been crammed to capacity with excitement and adventure. He had been heedless of everything except his turbulent little spirit's demand for action. Now, however, he was

"Moonshine Madness," copyright, 1923, by Max Boner.

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getting old; and, like all ageing men, he found his thoughts turning gradually more and more to his youth.

"De ol' lady mus' be close ta seventy," he muttered, basing his random calculation on the fact that he himself was almost fifty.

Judging by the handwriting of the pathetically scrawled little notes that reached him at intervals in care of general deliveries, she must also be getting quite feeble. He sighed, looking absent-mindedly over the flat, cacti-covered border country and at the phenomenon of falling snow; while a little voice insistently whispered—

"Go home an' see y'ur mudder, Joe."

"But I ain't got any front," came the ready excuse. "D'ya want a guy ta go home at Crismus time on de bum? De folks 'd say 'I tol' y'u so,' an' mebbe gimme de gate."

"If y'u wait till y'u git a front, y'u'll never see y'ur mudder, Joe. Don't y'u know she's lybel ta croak any time?"

The tramp pondered, at bay before his conscience. He pulled a sack of makin's from his pocket and rolled and smoked a cigaret. With a guilty uneasiness he paced up and down beside the track. It was a long, cold, lonesome wait—waiting for a train on a single-track road in southwestern Texas, where few trains run. He mused with an ever-growing sense of guilt upon his past life and his neglect of his mother. Over the alkali plain the dusk crept down. He shivered. His thoughts flew back to the time, almost half a century past, when a patient little mild-faced woman had tucked him nightly into bed. How many times since then had the chill night wind found him lying on the bare floors of box cars, far from the ministering touch of her hand?

At last. The long freight train thundered into view, engine's headlight glaring through the shadows, brakes grinding her slowly to a stop. The locomotive drew up to the water plug, softly panting. Dimly the tramp, crouching a few yards distant, could see the burly figure of the fireman as he reached out and pulled the spout over to the tender. Five minutes afterward, with full tank and ready for the next lap of the journey, the locomotive was backing down to her haul. Still Joe crouched and hesitated. A sharp struggle was going on in his seared heart. A voice seemed to be roaring at him—

"I t'ought y'u had guts, y'u li'l stiff?"

"Sure, I got guts," was the somewhat doubtful mental retort.

"Den w'y in —— don't y'u go home an' see y'ur poor ol' mudder? Ain't y'u got no princippuls, y'u li'l bum, hey? Or are y'u 'fraid uv a li'l snow?"

Five blasts of the whistle called in the flagman. Two blasts. The drive-wheels whirled frantically. Then came a ponderous bellowing, the clank of straining drawheads and the jerky rumbling of a train of box cars drawing taut. The freight was on her way. Westbound, to the land of sunshine and flowers? No—bound North, to the land of snowballs. She carried one passenger.

PADDY'S PLACE is on Seneca Street. In front of it hangs the strictly Volsteadian sign, "Soft Drinks and Cigars." Ten paces from Paddy's is Charley's Place, also purporting to be dedicated to the kickless tipple legalized by the Eighteenth Amendment. From Charley's to Whitey's is no farther than the proverbial hop, skip and a jump. The said Whitey, judging by the legend, "Soft Drinks Only," that emblazons his window, is a stanch supporter of the Anti-Saloon League.

Now, if you were to stumble on the doorstep when coming out of Whitey's Place and fall east, you would find yourself directly in front of Shorty's. Shorty's Place's sole excuse for existence is, according to the laconic signboard, "Hot Dogs." Tacking east, with your cargo of soft drink and dog aboard, it is quite possible that, if you are a good navigator, you may yet cast anchor in Tony's Place, otherwise known as "The Old Barrel House." Rather an odd name for a soft drink place, but—there you will probably stay.

Yes. Within one block on Seneca Street and on one side of that street there are five soft drinkeries—Paddy's, Charley's, Whitey's, Shorty's and Tony's—which proves that Buffalo is philosophically resigning itself to the enlightened era of soft drink.

The door of the Barrel House opened. A man came forth. Not steadily and confidently, as a man ought to come out of a soft drink place, but with a stagger and sudden sprawl on the sidewalk. In the doorway appeared for an instant a short,

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squat man, red-faced and leering, a policeman's night stick grasped in his right hand. Then the door was slammed shut.

The unfortunate on the sidewalk presently regained his feet. He was a little man, apparently about five feet two inches in height. Blood, trickling down his cheek from a cut on the forehead, dropped upon his shabby clothes. The neck of a bottle protruded from his coat pocket. In a dazed manner he made his way along the street until, with an instinctive fear of collapse, he stumbled into the nearest doorway, which happened to be that of Paddy's Place.

"What's the throuble, lad?" inquired Paddy. "Are ye losht?"

The little man did not seem able to reply. His head wobbled uncertainly on his shoulders. The big, good-natured proprietor piloted him to a chair beside the stove.

"I see that guy yistiddy in the Bar'l House," remarked one of the loungers present. "He had a good front, an' he had dough. He was blowin' the house."

"Aha!" muttered Paddy. "So they picked the poor lad clean, eh? 'Tis a wondher thot he got away wid the bottle of moonshine. They musht have overlooked thot."

Paddy solicitously pulled the flap of the coat pocket over the exposed bottle.

"That Bar'l House is gittin' fierce, Paddy. Tony gits away wit' murder. Guys beat up an' robbed in there ev'ry day. Things is worse'n they ever was in the saloon game. W'y, the other day I see a guy shoot 'is bank roll an' then pull off 'is benny an' peddle it fur two bucks—a good benny, an' right at th' beginnin' o' Winter. That stuff o' Tony's sure makes a guy plumb nuts."

"Tony makes thot shtoof himsilf an' dhrinks it himsilf. Hooky dhrinks it, too. They're all crazy, I tell ye. But they've got protiction. Do ye mane to tell me thot they can get away wid shtunts like thot if they haven't got protiction?"

"——! I see guys comin' out o' that Bar'l House in their bare feet—had their shoes pinched right offen them while they was asleep in a chair."

"That Hooky is a bad egg, too."

"Hooky? Ivery day he comes along the line lookin' for tow-lines thot he can shteer into Tony's Place. They do say thot he even goes down to the railrroad station to find shtrangers in the city thot's lookin' for a dhrink. Tony allows him so much for bringin' in a good shpinder. Wance Hooky hooks a lad wid money, the chonces are thot the lad won't lave the Barrel House wid a cint."

"How did Hooky lose his hand, Paddy?"

"He usht to be a brakemon on the railrroad whin he was a young mon. Thot was twinty yearrs ago. Wan day whin he was half dhrunk he was chasin' a little hobo in the Sinica yard. The little thramp was too nimble for him an' got away. Hooky fell down beside the thrain an' the wheels run over his hond. Hooky shwears thot if he iver runs acrross thot thramp, he'll rip him open wid his hook."

"He'd be a bad actor in a scrap, with that hook."

"For a couple of minutes," admitted Paddy. "He's shtrong, an' thot hook would rip open a mon's face in wan slash. But Hooky is rotten wid moonshine. He's been soaked in whishky for years. He couldn't shtand a shcrap more thon a minute or two. Some day he'll dhrop dead, like thot big Shwade thot dhropped on the strate lasht wake."

"Big, good-lookin' feller wit' th' red face? Is he croaked?"

"Shure. Too much moonshine. His heart shtopped jusht like thot."

Paddy snapped his fingers.

The next arrival in Paddy's Place was a big-limbed, broad-shouldered man with a bloated, purple-tinted face. A wicked-looking hook protruded from his right coat sleeve in the place where the hand had been.

"Gimme a shot," he growled.

The look the big proprietor directed toward the newcomer was anything but cordial.

"Hooky," he said rebukingly, "ye know thot I don't sell anny of thot shtoof overr thish bar. It isn't a shot thot ye want, at all, at all. 'Tis rubber-neckin' ye are, to see if ye can find anny live ones thot ye can entice over to the Barrel House. But, wid such a ricommendation of Tony's hoshpitality as thot, I belave ye can be betther employin' yourr pursuasive talents ilsewhere."

Paddy pointed to the battered stranger who, with chin sunk on his breast, hands limp at his sides and drops of blood still falling at intervals from the cut on his forehead, still sat dazed in the chair where the proprietor had put him. Hooky scowled.

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"Him?" he carelessly grunted. "Aw, ——! He falls asleep an' some o' them bums gits to him, Paddy. He puts up a holler w'en he wakes up. W'at kin me an' Tony do? We can't be lampin' all them bums all th' time. 'Tain't Tony's fault. Anyway, the guy starts rough-housin', so Tony beans him. Git me?"

Hooky drew up a chair and sat by the stove. Frowning, the big Irishman went behind the bar and began polishing glasses.

"Who is he, an' where does he come from? Wan of th' lads was sayin' thot he saw him yestherday wid money an' a good suit of clothes."

"I ain't never seen the guy till yisdtidy, m'self," was Hooky's sullen retort. "Reckon he peddled his front hisself."

THE frown on Paddy's brow deepened. Suddenly the door swung open and two men—one tall and lanky, his companion short and stout, both dressed in the height of fashion and wearing jeweled tiepins and diamond rings—stepped bruskly inside. The smug, set look of officialdom sat on the countenance of each.

"*Mutt* an' *Jeff*," whispered the loungers cautiously among themselves.

"Maybe it's a pinch," suggested one of them softly.

"Naw—Paddy don't sell nuttin' but beer."

The eyes of the two dry sleuths roved quickly about the bar-room, dwelling individually on the overalled loungers, Hooky and the bloody-faced man in the chair near the stove.

"——'s bells!" exclaimed one of the sleuths, nudging his partner. "Now don't that little bum over there look something like Sniper?"

"Gad! Sure does. But the Sniper's a good many miles away from here, hey?"

The agents stared a moment at the battered little derelict. Then they laughed, glancing meaningly at each other. At last, leaning familiarly over the bar, they smiled wisely at the big soft drink vendor to whom they began talking in low and earnest tones—the tall man with a thin hand thrust out on the bar and drumming it with long white fingers, sophisticated eyes dwelling on Paddy's rough, impassive face; the short man nodding, fat jowls sagging over his high collar, caressing a budding mustache with a sleek and pudgy hand. Paddy listened.

"Ye're talkin' to the wrong mon!" he declared loudly at last, crashing his huge red fist, gnarled and hairy, down upon the bar in front of the visitors. "This is an honesht place an' I do business wid honesht wurrkin' min. There's not an ounce of moonshine thraffic behind this bar. If ye can prove thot there is, I'll pay me fine into the proper chonnel, where it belongs. But rimimber thish——"

The big Irishman well-nigh cracked his bar with the force of another blow, thrusting his massive head, with parted lips and clenched teeth, aggressively forward toward the faces of the startled prohibition enforcers.

"—I'll have no dealin's whatsoiver wid crooks. Ye arre the crooked riprrisintitives of the greatest Shtate of all this great an' glorious counthry, wid your shporty clothes an' your fat salaries an' your gineral insolence. The Shtate pays ye to look for ivvydince against the law breakerrs and to arrist thim afther ye've got it. Ivvydince? Ay, ye've got enough to arrist practically all the soft dhrink places in Buffalo. An' why don't ye do it? 'Tis because, if ye arrist thim, ye'll lose all thot graft. Ye'll niver arrist annybody thot comes across, unless ye're makin' some grand shtand play to fool the public. But here's wan mon who'll niver come across to ye. If ye get the goods on me I'll go to Court like an honesht law breaker an' pay me fine."

The two prohibition enforcers backed toward the door, white with rage and mortification.

"We'll git you, you big harp!" they shouted, shaking their manicured, bediamonded fists and slamming the door.

There was a short silence in Paddy's Place. Then some of the loungers snickered.

"I'm sick an' tired of thim crooks an' their dirthy insinooations," growled Paddy. "The more I see of thim, the more rispict I've got for an honesht burglar."

Paddy set some tall glasses upon the bar and began drawing beer.

"Now," said he reflectively, "if I wanted to run thish place shtrictly accordin' to prohibition standards, belave me whin I tell ye I could make plinty of money. I could pay thim shcoundrels for protiction, the same as the rist iv thim. I could have women in my back room to rob the wurkin'

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min. Why, 'tis only the day before yesterday thot two of thim she-vampires ashked me to serve thim wid dhrinks. I took thim two glasses iv beer an' said: 'Ladies, this treat is on me. This is a wurkin' min's place, an' I serve ye only as guests.' But the she-divils mishundershtood me an' wan of them laughed an' said, wid bold eyes: 'Anny time ye have annything, let us know,' an' she handed me a carrd wid a Eagle Shtreet address. An' what do ye think she meant by 'annything'? She meant, whiniver there is some poor divil of a wurkin' mon here thot's shpindin' his hard-earned money, to let thim know an' they'll be along an' see thot he's relieved of the rist of it an' divide the profits wid me."

A stern look gradually replaced the geniality on Paddy's face.

"An' there's min right on this very shtreet thot's doin' thot same," he said bluntly, looking at Hooky.

Hooky scowled. Paddy's mood suddenly changed.

"Come up, all ye wurkin' min," he invited with sudden good humor, "an' have a dhrink. But don't be afther takin' away anny of this beer wid ye an' havin' it annylized, or I might be havin' to pay *Mutt* an' *Jeff* hush money."

Grinning, the men confronted the bar, Hooky among the number.

"I said 'wurkin' min,' " said Paddy scornfully, looking at Hooky.

The cripple scowled, turned on his heel and shambled out of the saloon. Standing a moment on the sidewalk, he observed at some distance, walking slowly down the street, the conspicuous figures of the two enforcement agents. A sudden gleam lit Hooky's bloodshot eyes and he followed quickly after them.

PADDY'S heart was moved to pity—a rare quality among soft drink vendors in these progressive days. Carefully he wiped the blood from the stranger's face and clothes.

"What's your name, lad?" he inquired kindly.

"McFale." The reply was dull, weak, listless.

"Aha! 'Tis a good Irish name. But ye ought to be ashamed of yoursilf, lettin' a little wop like thot thrim ye. Too dhrunk to defind yoursilf, eh? Have ye anny money?"

"Clean," mumbled McFale, passing his hand slowly and dazedly over his forehead and staring only half-comprehendingly at Paddy.

"Have ye got a home or frinds in this town?"

McFale vaguely shook his head. A customer entered, his overcoat covered with snow.

"Shnow!" ejaculated Paddy. "'Tis a bad night for a homeless mon widout money. Thot Tony ought to get twinty years for the shtunts he's pullin' off. Mike, ye're goin' down Main Shtreet, aren't ye? Here's a quarther. Take this lad along wid ye an' pay for his flop in a lodgin' house. A good shlape will do him good an' he's got a dhrink in his pocket for the marnin'."

EASTBOUND through a blizzard at fifty miles an hour rushed the South Shore Limited. The splendid train—all steel and solid vestibuled—carried four hundred and one passengers. Four hundred of these, provided with both mileage and Pullman tickets, were oblivious of the riotous elements outside—protected against them by firm steel walls.

In the debilitating heat of the car interiors they lounged on upholstered seats; some languidly thumbing over magazines, others drowsily waiting for the urbane black men to make up their berths. Many were gabbling speciously in the smoking compartments, or coughing and wheezing in the fume-filled air. Several leaned against the cold window panes, scratching indolently at the accumulated frost with polished finger nails to catch glimpses of the furiously driving flakes without.

They were half-bored with one another; half-bored with the world. Their leisurely thoughts dwelt variously on bank balances, stocks, samples, fat orders, frocks, teas, theaters, liquor, tobacco, gastronomy. These were four hundred well-civilized, tolerably circumspect passengers into whose complacence crept not one second's suspicion of the fact that, within a few paltry yards of their careless opulence, rode yet another passenger who was putting up a game fight for his life.

Because, clinging to an iron ladder on the outside of one of those steel walls, exposed to the biting cold and the full violence of the storm, barehanded, overcoatless, with neither ticket nor money—rode passenger

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the four hundred and first. A little cap of Summer design only half-covered his ears. His turned-up collar afforded scarcely an inch of additional protection to his neck. His back was turned to the blast, head sunk as low as possible between the hunched shoulders.

The driving flakes smote the huddled little figure at gale-like velocity. They struck the forward end of the car and rebounded, lodging in his eyes, nose and ears. They found the crevice between his coat collar and neck, resolving into icy rivulets that trickled down his breast and spine. No immediate escape from his peril was possible. To have jumped from the swift train would have meant practically certain death.

The only alternative was to climb the ladder to the roof of the car and make his way forward to the tender and thence to the engine. His limbs were so stiff from the cold, however, that the attempt would have been suicidal. His life or death was simply a matter of endurance. If his little frame held enough vitality to keep heat in itself until the train arrived at a station, his life might be spared.

Onward through the storm drove the Limited; four hundred civilized passengers snoring, indifferently yawning, voting life a bore. But the little chap on the second blind back was not finding life a bore. His bulldog jaws were clamped on a bit of sentiment and set in a grim resolve. Death rode there beside him, but he did not whimper.

Presently the train sped through an area of light streaked with long strings of freight cars looming dimly through the snow. Frantic screechings and puffings of yard engines pierced the wild din of storm. The fast numbing brain of the freezing tramp roused itself, considered, and then flashed new encouragement to the stiffening body.

"De Seneca yard," he mumbled between chilled lips. "Dere's a chance fur me ta make de grade yet."

He had good reason to remember the Seneca yard. Before his mind's eye flitted a picture of the long-ago. He saw a nimble little tramp swinging aboard a freight train that was just pulling out for the West—standing on the bumpers between two box cars. He saw the burly form of the head-end brakeman coming suddenly and threateningly down the ladder from the top. He saw the little tramp's quick leap to safety. He saw the big railroader, who seemed to have been half-drunk, slip from the lowermost rung of the ladder and fall headlong beside the moving train, his right hand outflung to break his fall. He saw the dazed look on the brakeman's face when, scrambling to his feet, he looked at the blood spurting from his right wrist and at the severed hand lying just inside the rail. He heard again in fancy the scream of pain, the wild oaths and the frightful revilings that followed. That had happened twenty years before. The little tramp had succeeded in making his getaway, but for twenty years he had given the Seneca yard a wide berth.

The South Shore Limited rolled on through the night, through the driving storm, into the city of Buffalo.

DECEMBER'S wind swept out of the northeast, across the Niagara peninsula, across the tail of Lake Erie, piling snow over the Bison City. The pure element descended in dense clouds, whirling crazily about tall buildings, settling at length in crannies and alleyways and blocking the thoroughfares with heavy drifts. Street cars stopped running. Automobiles were stalled in every street. Only a few wallowing pedestrains could be seen.

While the heads of the street cleaning department with wrinkling brows thought on their morrow's problem and planned a round-up of the jobless to help the city out of her sudden plight, down below the Terrace in the Lower Main Street flop-houses, beside red-hot stoves, the said jobless were already disposing in fancy of their forthcoming stake. In the Anchor flop half a hundred men squatted around on chairs and benches and plotted against Hard Luck, prating of the overcoats and shoes and caps they would buy and the ham and cabbage wherewith they would gorge themselves and the money they would plant behind the desk to secure the rest of their Winter flop.

"——!" exploded a grizzled old floater while he twisted a cigaret. "Youse guys makes me tired. Dem moonshine dumps'll git all of dis coin. What's de use of kiddin' y'urselves?"

A little man sitting hunched in a chair before the fire nodded in sorrowful acquiescence. In a half-dazed manner he removed his cap and passed his hand over his forehead, disclosing an ugly bruise over the

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right eye. Just then the street door was flung open and in stumbled an odd-looking little chap, hardly five feet tall, with a bull-dog sort of jaw and restless, beady eyes.

He wore no overcoat. His tattered suit, encrusted with snow and ice, seemed frozen to his body. His clothes crackled as he came haltingly toward the fire, holding a snowball in his hands that he was awkwardly trying to rub over his frostbitten fingers. The man's face was bluish white with black smoke smudges. His body was shaken with constant tremors and his teeth maintained a persistent chattering.

"Sit down, bud—near the stove."

One of the crowd rose to his feet and generously pushed a chair toward the newcomer.

"T-t'anks, l-lad," was the little man's grateful, chattered acknowledgment.

He sank down upon the seat, drawing his suffering body as closely as he dared to the red-hot stove. Beside him was the man with the bruised forehead.

"Fall in the lake, bud?" inquired the latter thickly, his eyes slowly and painstakingly traveling over the unusual points of his neighbor.

"Naw—ridin' d-de b-b-blin' on d-de Sout' Shore L-lim'ted."

"Good ——!" exclaimed one of the lodgers. "On a night like this? Wonder y'u didn't freeze stiff!"

The tramp tersely chattered out the information that he had caught the train in Chicago and that matters had progressed satisfactorily with him until, after having left Erie, they had run into the blizzard.

"You an' me's both got trouble, bud," lamented his neighbor. "But I think I got a drink left somew'eres. If I can find it I'll split with you."

The speaker, still in a half-daze, fumbled about in his pockets until he located a pint flask of liquor. He held it out to the hobo.

"Moonshine," grinned one of the crowd. "That'll thaw y'u out."

"Sure," agreed another. "An' if y'u stick to it, it'll knock y'u out."

The half-frozen man's lips already had closed over the bottle's mouth and a gill of the harsh liquor had gurgled into his throat. He coughed.

"Dat's a life-saver, pal," he breathed huskily. "I won't fergit y'u."

"T'awed out already, ain't y'u, guy?" grinned one of the throng. "Dat moonshine's great stuff. Hey—where'd y'u blow from?"

"Texas. I wuz headed West fur de Winter, but I changed me mind. T'ought I'd come home fur Crismus. Ain't seen me mudder fur ten years—see? T'ought I'd kinda s'prize her."

"——! Y'u blew up frum th' Sout' in th' middle o' Winter?"

The incredulity of the listening men was wide-eyed.

"Sure t'ing," was the ready reply.

"W'ere's y'ur home, lad?"

"Brooklyn. On de road, de guys calls me 'Brooklyn Joe.' "

"Broke, Joe?"

"Sure t'ing."

Several of those present glanced meaningly at one another.

"Le's flop dis guy," suggested one. "He's sure a game li'l' lad. Chip in a coupla jits."

Brooklyn Joe soon had his bed money in his hand.

"W'y don't ya stay in dis boig an' make a snow stake?" suggested one of the contributors suddenly. "Ya've got nearly t'ree weeks till Crismus. Dey'll be runnin' roun' like mad tamorra, lookin' fur guys ta clean de streets. Half a buck an hour."

"I ain't got nuttin' ta hol' me up," demurred Joe.

"Nuttin' to it. Git out early in de mornin' an' shovel walks fur de lazy stiffs in de private houses. Y'u kin pick up a ten-spot on short jobs, workin' hard all day. Dat'll hol' y'u up fur ten days w'ile y'ur workin' fur de city—see? Den y'u kin drag y'ur time an' front up an' ride home right. But—stay away frum de moonshine atter y'u git de jack in y'ur jeans."

"Dat's right, buddy. If ya hit de moonshine ya'll leave dis boig wit'out a pair of sox."

Thawed out and filled with much hope and good advice, Joe finally got to bed.

"SCOFFIN'S is soived, Sniper."

Joe poured the savory mess upon the two battered soup plates that formed the principal part of their dining service. McFale had already half-finished his portion of mulligan by the time Joe had poured the Java.

"Pal, as a cook I'll say you're tray bo coo."

"W'atever dat means," grinned the hobo. "Mebbe y'u're coisin' me."

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"Cursin' you?——! You little tramp, you don't know a bokay w'en you pick it up? 'Tray bo coo' is frog for O.K. See? Now, if we only had a bottle o' vin tooj——"

"Aw, can de frog. I'll take a can of good Amerikin lager'n ale an' y'u kin have a bottle of good Amerikin moonshine—hey, Sniper?"

"You go to ——, you little tramp. I'll take back ev'rythin' I said about your' cookin'."

McFale lit a cigaret and began pacing moodily up and down the shabby little apartment. Any reference to moonshine touched his sensitive nature to the quick.

The chance meeting of these two men in the Anchor flop on the night of the blizzard when McFale, just emerging from his debauch, had given the half-frozen hobo a drink of whisky, had been instrumental in bringing them together. Joe was a Brooklynite. McFale was a New Yorker. Both were comparative strangers in Buffalo. Both were down in their luck and has secured temporary employment in the street-cleaning department.

Joe, with an old hobo's deep-rooted aversion to sleeping in a "scratch-house," had suggested "jungling-up" in a small housekeeping room. McFale had readily assented. They had rented a little den on Swan Street, once the social hub of Buffalo's aristocracy but now so fallen that even John Tatters with cash in his hand may anchor there.

"Toity bucks made already," mused Joe aloud. "Dat means ten fur a benny, ten fur a suit, ten fur a pair uv kicks an' a lid an' a collar'n hames. I gotta git twenty more—ten fur a ticket on de cushions ta N' Yawk an' ten ta buy somet'ing fir de ol' lady. De snowballs brings me luck, an' here I been duckin' dem fur de las' ten years. W'at ya t'ink uv dat, hey Sniper?"

The little tramp's heart was gayly singing.

"Thirty bucks for a front, hey? Is that w'at y'ur figurin' on?" queried McFale. "——! I tossed out eighty berries for mine—the one that they swiped on me."

"I'll git a front fur toity," retorted Joe confidently. "Dey don't put nuttin' over on me."

"Which means that I'm a fall guy—is that it, you little shrimp?"

McFale lorded it over Joe in respect of size, although he was really only a couple of inches taller than the hobo. Both men were gritty. In the zero weather, without overcoats, ten hours a day they shoveled snow—doggedly, shiveringly—but adding dollar after dollar to the fund that was to lift them out of their plight and take them home in time to spend Christmas with their relatives.

"Fall guy, eh?" repeated McFale. I wasn't no fall guy w'en I was in France."

"W'at d' y' mean by dat, hey?"

"Did you ever bump a guy off, you little shrimp?"

"Croak a guy, y' mean?"

"You said it, 'bo."

"Naw. Dat's one sin I ain't got on me conshuns," declared Joe solemnly. "But dere's lots of guys dat's tried ta croak *me*."

McFale spat scornfully toward the battered tin cuspidor that the landlady had carefully placed over the hole in the carpet.

"*Tried*, hey? There was only one time that I ever tried to bump anybody w'en I didn't connect—see?"

"How was dat?" asked Joe curiously.

"Three years ago w'en I was jist startin' me last hitch. Been back from France about six months. Held up me mitt again in the Presidio for another stack. Know w'ere the Presidio is, hey?"

"Frisco, ain't it?"

"Righto. You're a tramp, all right. Well, I was on old guard one day, chasin' pris'ners. The two birds I was chasin' was two gen'rals—a tall, slim guy an' a fat, short guy—"

"Dat musta been Gen'ral Washin'ton an' Gen'ral Grant," interrupted Joe.

McFale glared. "Don't show your ignorance, guy. I'm referrin' to gen'ral court-martial pris'ners, see? One was a compny clerk that got a year an' a kick for makin' out fake passes for guys confined to quarters. The other was handed two years an' a kick for lootin' quartermaster's stores. Them two bob-tails was due to be sent to Alcatraz in a couple o' days to do their bit. I chased 'em around all day on fatigue, follerin' the ash cart. I've got a pint o' moonshine on me hip. I'm half-stewed, see. Well, it's only about five minutes to recall an' they're dumpin' the last can of ashes in the cart. I'm on pass after I turn these birds back into the guard-house, an' I'm

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thinkin' about more moonshine at two-bits a throw—when, *whango!* a can of ashes smacks me in the kisser. As soon as I can see I starts shootin', but by that time the two bob-tails is over the wall. The provost comes runnin' up an' the guard is turned out, but they don't get the guys. As far as I know, they're goin' yet."

"I s'pose y' got a bawlin' out?" inquired Joe sympathetically.

A grim twinkle lighted McFale's gray eyes.

"To tell you the truth, pal," he resumed, "Next day there was a guy with a gun follerin' me. I was tried for bein' drunk on guard and neglect o' duty. I got six months an' a kick. If it hadn't been for me war record, I'd have got two years."

Joe gazed reflectively at his companion.

"So y'u're a bob-tail, are y'?" he mused. "Well, Sniper, some of de bes' soldiers in de country is bob-tails. I been wit' dem on de road, an' I know. Dey'll stick wit' y' an' dey'll scrap."

"I ain't no fist-fighter," admitted McFale, "but I ain't afraid of any guy with a gun."

"I never packed a gat in me life," admitted the hobo. "It on'y gits a guy in trouble on de road. But I ain't afraid of any guy in an even break wit' de mitts."

"W'atever put you on the road, you little shrimp?" queried Sniper curiously, scanning the homely but steadfast lines of his little partner's countenance.

A slow flush began to spread over Joe's face.

"A skirt, eh?" demanded Sniper in delight, watching the prompt expansion of the red area of the hobo's cheeks. "I didn't exactly think it was John Booze. You might hit it up once in a w'ile, but you ain't w'at I'd call a rummy."

"Can de argyment, Sniper," said Joe slowly, a click of steel in his tone. "I ain't discussin' fambly matters—see?"

"Hits you w'ere it hurts, hey, pal?" grinned Sniper. "Well, guy, we've all had our troubles, I guess. I got mine, too. I ain't seen the folks since I went to France in nineteen. They know I'm bob-tailed an' they know why. Now if I go home on the bum on top of ev'rythin', they'll think I'm a bum right. I got to have some kind of a front an' a dollar w'en I land there, all right."

"How did y' happen ta unload in dis boig, Sniper?"

"Lookin' for a drink."

"Well, y' got w'at yu' was lookin' fur, didn't yu'?"

McFale scowled. "And then some," he muttered. Then he began to grin. "Oh, I might as well tell you the real dope, 'bo. I was stewed w'en I loaded on the train at Frisco—me an' a suitcase full of booze. I was still stewed w'en we hit Buffalo, but the booze was all gone. I got off the train to git more booze. Me nut was twisted. I'd been stewed for a week an' I hardly knowed w'ere I was at. There was some guy—a cripple with a hook instead of a mitt—in front of the station. The cripple sizes up me an' me jag an' whispers that he can steer me into a drink. So I mooches along with this guy till he brings me to the joint he's speakin' about. I don't remember anything about the dump except it's full of rummies. There's some short, red-faced guy behind the bar. Bein' a sociable guy, I starts in buyin'. Me clock stops right there, but I got a dim hunch that I goes to sleep in the back room. I dreams that the red-faced bloke frisks me for the hundred berries I got salted in the inside pocket. Then I dreams that I'm gittin' undressed. Then I'm gittin' dressed again. I'm all tangled up. After a w'ile somethin' connects hard with me dome an' I'm told to 'hit the air.' I breeze down the street an' fall into some other guy's dump. Nex' thing I know, I'm comin' back to life, sittin' in the lodgin' house. I ask the clerk how come I got there. Some guy he don't know brings me in, he says, an' pays for me flop."

"How 'bout de scat dat ya t'aws me out wit'?"

"O, I figger they let me keep that, thinkin' I'd keep stewed for a w'ile an' forget to make a holler toot sweet."

"W'at's dat?"

" 'Toot sweet'? That's frog for 'right offa the reel.' "

"W'at good would it do yu' ta make a holler? Half of dem joints is pertected. Don't ya know dat, hey?"

"Sure I know it. That's why I didn't make any holler."

"Ain't ya got no idea 't all w'ere dat dump is?"

"Sure. They's thirty-two points of the compass. Well, it lays right in one of them thirty-two directions."

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"How 'bout de guys' names? W'at's de name of de guy dat runs de dump?"

"Seems to me they called the red-faced guy 'Tony.'"

Joe burst into sudden laughter. "Dey call half uf de wops in de country 'Tony,'" he cried.

McFale flung his cigaret butt at the cuspidor and whirled on Joe.

"That's right—laugh, you little shrimp! I ain't left this burg yet. Maybe somebody's goin' to leave it before me, too!"

"Is dat w'y ya got de nickname 'Sniper'?" queried the little hobo mischievously.

McFale tramped up and down in moody silence. Joe's thoughts returned to domestic channels. He gave the two soup plates and table tools a hasty bath and prepared for bed.

"Ten fur a benny," he was thinking, "ten fur a suit, ten fur kicks an' a lid an' a collar'n' hames——"

He dreamed he was cashier of the Bowery bank.

ABRAHAM GUTFREUND bought and sold second-hand clothing and shoes. His place was located on Seneca Street, opposite Paddy's soft-drink saloon. Abey's place was a dirty little hole. At first glance it was almost unthinkable that its unkempt and bewhiskered proprietor had many thousand dollars deposited for safe keeping in the big building at the corner of Main Street. In his immediate neighborhood Abey had a number of competitors who likewise plied their calling in dirty little holes. In fact in the same block and within a few yards of one another, were the establishments of Abey, Izzy, Sammy, Benny and Jakey. All trafficked in second-hand clothing and shoes. All owed their phenomenal prosperity to the progressive features of the soft drink sector wherein they dealt.

Abraham, who was considered to be a crafty merchant, was devoting all his manly salesmanly qualifications to effecting a sale. He spread, palms upward, his crooked hands; he hunched his thin, drooped shoulders; he cocked his head eloquently on one side and then, turtle-like, sought to draw it down between his shoulders. Then he rubbed his hands. Then he clawed at his greasy beard. Then he rolled his deep-set eyes. And all the while he kept up a dismal wheedling in a mongrel tongue. The stubborn little customer was not perceptibly impressed, however, with the fine art of second-hand salesmanship.

"Toity bucks fur de whole woiks—not anudder jit," he declared.

There was a decisive click to his little bulldog jaws. He proceeded to back up this final declaration by taking a couple of steps in the direction of the door. Abraham, being a crafty merchant, could not thus view the brusk departure of thirty dollars with equanimity.

"You vant to beggar me—*nicht!*" he almost screamed, wringing his hands and following closely after the departing bargainer. "Vy, *mein* frendt, *mein* frendt, dot ofergoat alone—"

Brooklyn Joe grinned heartlessly. He stopped, turned, counted out thirty dollars in U. S. currency and laid the money upon the counter.

"I'll put de front on here, bo," he said to Abraham, lugging the various articles to the rear of the shop.

The dealer was still wringing his hands and calling upon *Gott* when the hobo returned, resplendent in all the diverse sartorial gear that distinguishes a modern man of affairs from hoi polloi. Everything that Joe had shivered and labored for, he had at last acquired—a sporty little overcoat, a natty suit, a nobby hat, a nifty pair of shoes, a gaudy shirt, a spotless collar and an ardent little tie. A faint blush of conscious grandeur showed on Joe's modest, homely face.

"Y'u kin keep de ol' duds if y' want dem, bo," he said magnanimously to Abraham. "Maybe y'u kin give dem away ta some poor bum dat needs dem."

The dealer gathered up the pitiful rags. A sinful smile appeared in his wise, glittering, old hawk eyes. Instead of throwing them into the ash can he wrapped them carefully in a bundle and laid them away.

Joe stalked grandly from the shop of Abraham and returned to the room on Swan Street. Within a few hours he expected to be on his way to New York City—not hungry and penniless and half-frozen on the blind baggage, but sitting in state on the cushions with a full paunch and with a ten-dollar bill in his pocket.

"Hey, Sniper! Pipe de front I cops fur toity bucks! Any guy dat coughs up eighty fur a outfit is a sucker—right?"

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The look that McFale directed toward his partner caused Joe to stop and stare in bewilderment.

"W'at's de matter, Sniper? Are y'u sick?"

The ex-soldier seized Joe's overcoat and examined it closely. Then he stared at the hat. The suit next came in for scrutiny, and lastly, the shoes.

"Well, I'll be ——!" shouted Sniper hoarsely. "You little shrimp, you're wearin' my front!"

The two men gazed at each other; on Joe's homely visage, a look of consternation; McFale's features gradually resolving into a smile of satisfaction. Joe began to feel nettled. The said front had just cost him thirty hard-earned dollars and an hour's merciless bargaining.

"Y'ure front, did y' say?"

"That's w'at I said—my front. Bought it in 'Frisco for eighty bucks. The whole works—coat, suit, lid an' kicks."

Joe felt for an instant as if the world were slipping beneath his feet. Then his spirit stiffened, his little bulldog chin was thrust out and a clink of iron came into his voice.

"Not on y'ur life, Sniper. Dis is my front. I passes out toity sheets ta de Jew fur dis outfit—see? Dat includes de benny, de suit, de lid, de kicks an' de collar'n' hames."

Joe and Sniper began glaring at each other like two terriers.

"Jist a minute," said McFale suddenly. "I can settle this argument."

He examined the inside of the overcoat; then, with a baffled shake of the head, he carried his examination to the inside of the under coat.

"That shows you," he snapped disappointedly, "that the front was stole. The tailors' marks has been cut out."

"Well, bo," said Joe coldly, "I paid fur dis property an' it belongs ta me."

"The —— you say!" exploded McFale. "I'll call a cop."

"I ain't stoppin' y'!" snarled Joe. "But y' better be able ta prove dat dis junk is y'urs, bo, atter ya calls dat cop. How are y'u gonna prove it, hey? Who swiped it offa y'u? W'ere was de trick pulled off? W'y, y' don't even know de joint w'ere y' was at, y' poor simp."

McFale's ire suddenly began to cool. He realized that Brooklyn Joe's reasoning was sound. If he laid claim to the clothes, what convincing testimony could he offer in support of his claim? He could accuse no specific individual of the theft—neither could he even locate the soft drink saloon where the theft had been committed. The ex-soldier was stumped. He began to regret having picked a quarrel with his fiery little partner.

"Bo," resumed McFale after an interval's reflection, " 'scuse me for bein' kind of hasty. It jist nacherly gits a guy's goat to see another guy wearin' his front—see? Now how about goin' over to this Jew's and findin' out who peddled him the front—hey?"

Joe pondered McFale's proposal. After all, Sniper was his partner. He should be given a fair chance to prove his ownership of the property. Joe realized that, provided he got his money back, he could readily buy another front. The outfit in dispute fitted both his frame and fancy, however, and Joe sighed. But at last fairmindedness triumphed over self.

"Dar's a go, Sniper. I'll take ya over ta de Jew's. If y'u kin prove dat dis front is de one dat was swiped frum y'u I won't say anudder woid—pervided I git me toity cases back."

The two men started at once for Abraham's place on Seneca Street. Sniper held his tongue with regard to the repayment of Joe's thirty dollar outlay. He knew that if he could once establish his ownership of the articles, the law would return them to him. The money question would have to be settled between the hobo and the Jew.

The light of anticipated business leaped into Abraham's eyes when Joe stepped into his shop accompanied by the seedy McFale. When the latter questioned him pointblank about the source of the apparel, however, Abey's furrowed and whiskered features underwent lightning change. He had bought a job lot of second-hand goods, he contended in his mongrel tongue, at an auction sale. These goods were part of the lot. That was all the information he could give.

He waved his hands, shrugged his shoulders, pawed his beard—gestures that were designed to emphasize his utter straightforwardness in the matter. But in the sinful old eyes, half-hidden behind matted brows, lurked a hint of a sneer.

"You —— sheeny!" shouted McFale.

Joe grabbed Sniper by the arm and counseled him to be quiet.

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"Dat rough stuff don't git y' nuttin'—ain't y' wise ta dat? Come outside wit' me a minute—I got a idee."

The hobo, having finally pulled his reluctant companion out of Abraham's shop, pointed out the various soft drinkeries on the other side of the street.

"Take a pike at dem dumps, pal," he advised soothingly. "Plob'ly one of dem is de dump w'ere y' got rolled."

McFale was looking intently at the exterior of Paddy's Place.

"That joint looks kind o' familiar," he muttered. "Le's go in. If I can git a line on a short, red-faced guy they call 'Tony,' or a guy with one mitt an' a hook, there's goin' to be somethin' doin'."

BEHIND the closed door of Paddy's Place sounded a bedlam of male voices. Occasionally above the din rose booming accents unmistakably Hibernian. When Joe and the Sniper stepped inside, the spectacle that met their gaze was inspiring—spellbinding. Over a score of men—rough-faced, rough-handed, rough-shod and clad mostly in overalls and heavy working clothes—were crowded in front of Paddy's little bar, tall glasses of beer clutched in their hands, all talking and laughing at once. Paddy's deep voice roared out at intervals to make itself heard above the merry hullaballoo.

"'Tis the lahst shtand of dimocracy, lads! Plenthy of good beer for all the wurkin' min."

"An' why shouldn't us wurkin' min have our beer, whin thim privileged classes has got their own cloobs, wid the besht of whishky——"

"An' dem rich blokes wit' de private stock in deir cellars——"

"While the wurkin' min's bellies be's pizened wid moonshine——"

"An' dem ol' geezers in Congress all de time t'inkin' up new ways ta——"

"Sure, they're afther our tobaccy, mon——"

"An' the nixt thing ye know, they'll be r-ringin' the curfew for us wurkin' min——"

Joe and McFale stood for some seconds gazing at the festive scene and listening to the naive utterances. Among the crowd were several of the city's snow-shoveling gang.

"Dis is w'at I calls de real t'ing," was Joe's enthusiastic comment. "Now if dey on'y had de free lunch back, it 'ud be like ol' times, hey, Sniper?"

McFale's thoughts, however, were far from flippant. Still clothed in the tattered outfit of relievers that had been donated to him after the plunderers had stripped him of his clothes, he found himself eying his well-dressed little partner with mortification and envy. Then he caught Paddy's eye. The big proprietor favored him with an instant smile of recognition.

"How are ye feelin', lad? The lasht time I saw ye, ye was a little undher the weather."

McFale reflectively ordered beer. He immediately concluded that this was the place into which he had inadvertently stumbled after he had been robbed and beaten. The trail was getting warm.

"Can I talk to you a minute?" he inquired of Paddy.

"Shure, lad, afther thrade quiets down a bit. Sit ye down an' take it aisy for a while."

"I can git some dope from this guy," whispered Sniper to Joe. "Maybe he can put me wise to the dump where I got trimmed."

The two partners sat by the stove, smoking and drinking beer. It was then about half-past eight in the evening. The little bar-room was jammed almost to the limit of its capacity. Presently, slouching through the street door, making his way somewhat unsteadily to the rear end of the bar, appeared a burly figure. His bloated, purplish face and bloodshot eyes denoted a man in a state of complete alcoholic saturation. From his right coat sleeve protruded a wicked looking hook.

Sniper, excitedly, half-rose from his chair and then sat down again, significantly kicking Joe's shin under the table. Hooky did not notice the two little men sitting quiet beside the stove. He stood at the rear end of the bar, scowling, saying no word to anybody present.

Joe was thinking that at some time in the past he had met the cripple somewhere. But twenty years is a long time; and twenty years of whisky-drinking bloats, coarsens and changes the whole texture of a man. Joe was puzzled, but his memory was not quite competent to bridge the gap.

Paddy glanced at Hooky—indifferently. He continued serving the other customers in front of the bar. Hooky, standing at the

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end of the bar, made a show of blowing his nose. Fumbling with his handkerchief, he dropped it, stooping awkwardly, unsteadily, to pick it up. It seemed to take Hooky a long time to recover his dropped handkerchief. He staggered around the end of, and slightly behind, the bar in his attempt. Farther toward the rear of the bar-room, also sitting at a table, was a member of the snow-shoveling gang—partially drunk. The Sniper, who was sitting facing him, saw him gazing curiously at the movements of Hooky, which were more discernible by him than by any one else in the saloon.

Paddy ignored his crippled customer. Hooky, standing at the rear end of the bar, glowered at Paddy. Then, with a half-uttered curse in his throat, he turned about and shambled back to the street door.

Thoughts came quickly to Sniper. He grasped Joe by the shoulders, pulling him over the table and putting his lips to his ear.

"Pal, will you wait for me right here—in this spot?" he whispered eagerly. "I'll follow that gink with the hook. I'll find out where I got trimmed. Then I'll come back. On the level, pal, will you wait for me right here?"

"Sure t'ing," replied Joe unhesitatingly to Sniper. "You'n' me's buddies, ain't we? If I tells y' I will, I will—hey?"

"Thataboy," whispered Sniper with satisfaction. "We'll git all squared around, an' then we'll blow to the big town—you an' me—hey?"

"I'll stick wit' ya, Sniper," promised Joe.

McFale followed Hooky.

Two men entered Paddy's Place. One was tall and slim and the other was short, fat and stout. Fashion had set her august seal on these men. The barrier of caste was quite manifest between them and the usual frequenters of Paddy's Place. Among the overalled, beer-drinking laborers they passed, smilingly, sneeringly, to the end of Paddy's bar.

"Ev'rybody outside!" they cried suddenly.

Paddy gazed at them, a high contempt in his blue eyes.

"The house is pinched," was the intelligence that gradually seeped into the brains of the frolicking men.

The vocal uproar fell into a short *diminuendo* and died away. Men began passing silently to the street.

"Git out!" said the tall man bruskly to Joe.

The tramp hesitated a moment, then decided to join the exodus. It was useless to buck the law, he reflected. The crowd of workingmen stood in the cold street until they saw Paddy come out of his place in the custody of *Mutt* and *Jeff*. The lights had been turned out. Paddy locked the door.

"I've been framed!" he boomed indignantly as the trio walked away.

The men, looking askance at the now darkened windows of the Fount of Democracy, melted gradually into the near-by moonshine dives. Charley got a slice of Paddy's trade, also Whitey. Shorty likewise scored. Some went even as far as the Barrel House.

Joe, left alone, stood looking anxiously about for Sniper. A bitter wind hummed up from the icy lake. The little hobo stepped into Charley's doorway for shelter. He could not tell how long the ex-soldier was likely to be absent.

"I'll jump in an' git a scat," decided Joe, his teeth beginning to chatter.

In Charley's Place there was a slight cessation of the vocal buzz when his slight little figure, garbed in the most approved masculine mode, stepped within. Charley, a dark-skinned man of medium height, eyed Joe with suspicious thoroughness.

"Gimme a scat," said the tramp boldly.

Charley hesitated.

"De guy's all right," spoke up one of the recent emigrants from Paddy's. "He was drinkin' in Paddy's before Paddy got pinched."

"Sure—he worked on the snow gang before he got fronted up," recommended another.

Joe, realizing that white collars and swell fronts are not invariably advantageous, grinningly thrust forth his hands over the bar for Charley's inspection, like an accused vagrant exhibiting his digits for judicial scrutiny. The saloonkeeper glanced once at the gnarled, knotted fists of the little tramp. Then he smiled and put a glass of liquor upon the bar.

The little hobo heard a rich, full-throated peal of laughter. It came from behind the closed door leading to the back room. Joe turned about and gazed a moment at the portal. He was by far the best dressed man in the saloon. Charley was studying him.

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As Joe, mindful of his promise to his partner, turned about preparatory to resuming his cold vigil on the street, the Italian filled Joe's empty glass.

"Cold, hah?"

"Sure t'ing."

Joe drank the second glass of moonshine. A queer thrill ran through his veins. Charley opened the door leading to the back room. Joe's gaze, turning irresistibly thither, met a flash of black eyes. The homeless, lonesome little chap quivered.

"De ladees ask-a you to have dreenk," said Charley, beckoning Joe.

SNIPER followed Hooky from Paddy's Place. Immediately two men—one tall and slim and the other short, fat and stout—stepped from a neighboring doorway and entered. Sniper glanced merely indifferently at them in the street's half-darkness. His thoughts were centered on Hooky.

The cripple walked without stopping until he reached the Barrel House. Sniper felt a thrill of remembrance as he glanced at the forbidding portal. He pushed in deliberately after Hooky and, seeing about a dozen wall-flowers seated about the stove in that attitude of utter abandonment to uselessness that characterizes their sect, he sank unobtrustively into a chair among them, cap over his yes, collar up-turned. His arrival was scarcely noticed.

Tony, the proprietor—short, squat and red-faced—stood behind his bar. As usual he was drunk on his own moonshine. Sniper saw Hooky whisper a few words in Tony's ear and saw the Italian's responsive nod and smile. The cripple was imparting to him the news of Paddy's arrest, of which Sniper was as yet in ignorance.

The ex-soldier suddenly decided upon a course of action. He had at last located the joint where he had been robbed of his money and his clothes. The man who was wearing his property was at that moment sitting in Paddy's Place. The solution ought to be easy. Sniper, cap still over his eyes, sauntered out without having been recognized.

A policeman when needed is one of the most frantically exasperating eluders there are. Sniper was aware of this little peculiarity attached to the watch-dog of the public welfare, but he did not know just where to go in order to locate the officer on the beat. He walked west on Seneca Street without encountering one. Then he turned up Michigan Avenue. Within the space of three blocks he had passed over a score of soft-drink places. The night was cold. He was engaged in a cold search. Sniper was cold. He thought once of going back to Paddy's Place to make sure that his partner was still there according to promise. But at length he dismissed this idea and decided to wait until he could return accompanied by the Law.

In the meantime he slipped into one of the soft-drink places and swallowed three glasses of moonshine. That put confidence into Sniper. At last he descried, blithely swinging his club and striding along the avenue, the corpulent outlines of a man armed and liveried for the public service. To him Sniper gave immediate and explicit details of his wrong.

"They robbed ye in the Barrel House?" demanded the officer.

"They sure did," replied Sniper. "Cleaned me. Money, clothes an' all. They peddled the front to Abraham the Jew across the street from Paddy's. There's a guy in Paddy's Place right now that's wearin' the clothes an' shoes. I want 'em back."

The officer rubbed his chin with the end of his night stick and cogitated. Sniper's request involved a disagreeable duty for him. The resort he was asked to investigate was under the protection of the higher-ups and the officer was aware of that fact. Nevertheless, however reluctant to comply with Sniper's request he might be, his outward allegiance to the public welfare demanded at least some show of complaisance toward a reasonable request.

"Come on, thin," invited the officer gruffly.

Sniper followed. Down to Seneca Street they went and up to the door of Paddy's Place. The saloon was in darkness. The door was locked. Sniper's chagrin and mystification were extreme.

"I thought ye told me there was a mon in here wearin' your clothes!" boomed the officer scornfully. "Paddy is closed up. Now what have ye to say to thot?"

Sniper had nothing to say. Something suddenly seemed to have gone wrong with his head. He began to wonder if the whisky he had drunk had not unbalanced him.

"Beat it, or I'll run ye in!" roared the Law with a threatening flourish of the stick.

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"Bringin' me down here on a cold night on a fool's errand like this! Ye're crazy wid the moonshine—thot's what ye are!"

Swiftly Sniper slunk away into the night. His head was awhirl. When he had left Paddy's Place the saloon was in a blaze of light and vibrant with the healthy boisterousness of frolicking labor. Half an hour later he had found it in darkness, although the evening was yet young and soft-drink places seldom close before twelve or one o'clock.

The ex-soldier sought enlightenment of the riddle through the medium of more moonshine. He stepped into one of the near-by places, which happened to be Whitey's. Whitey was an Irishman, but not of Paddy's type. Whenever he served a glass of his licensed soft drink, it was his habit to glance swiftly and cautiously toward the door. Sniper had no difficulty in getting drink in Whitey's Place. Such apparel as he wore is usually *carte blanche* into soft drink society. Also there were present one or two of Paddy's customers who had worked on the snow.

"The guy's all right, Whitey," said one of these reassuringly.

Sniper turned and recognized the speaker.

"Hey, Mack," he inquired eagerly, "wasn't you drinkin' in Paddy's jist now?"

"Sure was, Jack."

"What's the matter he's closed up?"

"Ain't y'u heard? W'y Paddy got pinched. Them two dicks they call *Mutt* an' *Jeff* pulled him about an hour ago. Paddy claims he was framed. Says somebody planted booze behind the bar. I think so meself, because Paddy never sold nuttin' but beer since that —— Eighteent' Amendment went troo."

"Hey, guy," asked Sniper excitedly, "you didn't notice what become of the little lad that was with me, in Paddy's, did you?"

"The li'l' guy wit' the swell front—the one that was y'ur buddy in the snow gang?"

"Righto. That's the guy I'm lookin' for."

Another snow-shoveler had entered Whitey's just in time to overhear the final words of the foregoing conversation.

"I c'n put ya wise, bud," said he. "That li'l' boid wit' the swell uniform jist went up the line wit' two dames."

"Two dames!" repeated Sniper stupidly.

"That's w'at I said, guy. He was buyin' them skirts booze in Charley's. They drifted up the line about ten minutes ago—the t'ree of 'em."

"Know which way they went?" demanded Sniper.

"Couldn't tell y'u that, Jack. Prob'ly the Tennerloin."

Sniper, armed with this meager information concerning Joe's whereabouts, rushed out again into the chill night. For two hours he tramped ceaselessly through that section of the city where Joe and the women were most likely to be found. Then at midnight, with a growing rage in his heart, he returned to Whitey's. He bought a pint of moonshine whisky and took it with him to the room in Swan Street, half-hoping to find that his partner had preceded him thither. But the little hobo was not there. Sniper consumed more than half the pint of liquor before falling drunkenly upon the bed.

SLOWLY down the steps of a house in Eagle Street walked a well-dressed little man whose homely face wore a woeful look. His fingers were mechanically exploring the pockets of his trousers, coat and overcoat; but the search seemed to be without result.

"Dem skoits trimmed me," he muttered at length.

Brooklyn Joe, after a night of frolic, had awakened to find the women gone and his pockets rifled of cash. Joe's head did not seem to fit well on his shoulders. He craved another drink of moonshine to straighten it out, but he had not the price. Had he still been wearing the tattered vestments of his vagabond days, to acquire the price of a few drinks would be an easy matter. Joe could have gone out on the "stem" and "plinged" the money.

But Joe, in his present state of sartorial grandeur, was quite shy. He was ashamed of such a proceeding. With such a prosperous exterior, he could not find it in his heart to ask alms. The higher spark in Joe somehow would not permit such a thing.

But, thinking of his old rags, Joe suddenly conceived a brilliant idea.

"I kin hock de benny back ta Abey," was his thought.

Abraham, quick to sense the exterior indications of embarrassment that marked his recent customer, looked at him with a shrewd twinkle in his sly old eyes.

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"How much fur de benny?" asked Joe somewhat sheepishly. "I'm flat, Abey. I gotta have a drink."

"How much you vant—eh?"

"Five bucks."

Abraham threw up his hands, spread out his palms, decisively shook his head.

"Two dollars," he said.

Ten minutes later Joe realized that he was no match for a Jew. Abraham was having his revenge. With a sigh, Joe at length removed the gorgeous garment and handed it back to the man from whom he had bought it. Abey then grudgingly put a two-dollar bill into Joe's hand.

Paddy's Place was still closed. Joe did not like to reenter Charley's. Only the night before he had posed grandly there, in the back room, buying whisky for the women. Now he had little money and no overcoat. Joe felt as if his disgrace were being advertised to the world. He went into Whitey's laying the two-dollar bill upon the bar.

"What'll it be?" inquired Whitey, scrutinizing Joe.

"Gimme a shot," said the hobo bluntly.

Whitey hesitated, looking toward the door.

"The guy's all right, Whitey. He worked on the snow."

Whitey put moonshine upon the bar and Joe drank it, calling promptly for another drink.

"Say, lad, y'ur partner was lookin' fur y'u las' night in here. I tol' him I saw y'u goin' up the line wit' two skirts."

The informant came across to the bar, looking at the change, looking inquiringly at the little tramp.

"Have a drink, guy," invited Joe. "So Sniper was lookin' fur me, hey?"

Joe decided to return soon to Swan Street and see if he could locate his partner; but meanwhile the snow-shoveling gang became a topic of immediate interest. It led to lengthy fraternization. Joe bought several more drinks for his former fellow-worker, inasmuch as the latter, having spent all that he had made, was now a wallflower—a lounging, hungry-eyed, predatory unit.

"I can't git away wit' this moonshine," he complained dismally to Joe. "It puts me flat on the bum. I lose the little sense that God A'mighty give me. It ain't like Paddy's beer. I kin git slopped on that an' git up nex' mornin' an' go to work."

Joe and this man talked much of the old days when good beer was openly sold and there was free lunch on the bar. A weird feeling—a sense of irresponsibility, of madness, was creeping into Joe's veins. He craved more of the strong poison. The keen edge of his conception of his duty to his pal Sniper became dulled. Joe spent with the importunate snow-shoveler the two dollars that he had gotten for the overcoat. His brain was on fire. One dominant idea pervaded his being. He wanted to get drunk.

The door of Whitey's Place was opened and a hook appeared. A big, purple-faced man followed, looking appraisingly over the patrons of the soft drink place through bloodshot eyes. He saw a little man, well-dressed and dapper, standing drinking at the bar. Hooky's interest was aroused. Among the surrounding drinkers he jockeyed into a strategic position beside the stranger.

"How's chances fur a drink, friend?" he growled in what was meant to be a good-natured tone.

Joe swung quickly about and faced Hooky. The cripple strove to establish a connection, somewhere, some time, between the bulldog-faced little chap beside him and someone he had previously known. But twenty years is a long time. And men change. And Brooklyn Joe, garbed according to the latest masculine mode, was exteriorly as far removed from a tramp as could be.

Joe's memory also suffered a prod. As on the evening previous, some instinctive element of antagonism seemed to grow between the cripple and himself. The hobo could not understand just why. Moreover, his perceptions had been dulled by the moonshine he had drunk. Likewise, the fact that Hooky had been the foremost factor in the undoing of Sniper, his pal, closed any possible door that the cripple might have been able to open into Joe's hospitality.

"I'm satisfied wit' me present cumpny," said Joe darkly.

Hooky glared at the little man, turned on his heel, slouched out of Whitey's Place.

SNIPER, having slept throughout the night in "heavy marching order," rolled over on the bed, dug his fingers into his burning eyes and finally reached consciousness. Joe had not

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returned. Bitterness against his partner, inflamed by the liquor he had drunk, leaped into his heart anew. He got on his feet, felt instinctively in his pocket to see if his money was safe and, finding it so, he drank the moonshine that remained in the pint bottle. Then he descended to the street.

"I'll show that li'l' bum—I'll show 'im," he muttered with a sudden savageness. "Out wit' skirts, hey? Out sportin' in *my* front, hey? Now what the —— d' you know about that?"

Sniper went directly to Seneca Street and entered Charley's Place.

"See anything of that li'l' guy that was here las' night with the skirts?" he inquired.

Charley looked the angry Sniper over, smelling the fumes of moonshine on his breath.

"Your-a fren?" he asked.

"I'm —— if he is!" exploded Sniper savagely. "I'd like to find that li'l' bum. I'd chase a cop after 'im. He's wearin' my front."

Charley looked mildly interested at this news, but his business instinct lay uppermost.

"Shot?" he inquired.

"Yah—gimme a shot."

Sniper, nursing his wrath, drank several of Charley's shots. He got no further news of Joe from Charley, however, so finally he left the place and went into Whitey's. In Whitey's his errand received great and unexpected encouragement.

"I wuz drinkin' wit' the guy not five minutes ago," announced a lounger, stepping forward in reply to the Sniper's question. "Said he'd see me later. Say, pal, how's the chances fur a drink?"

The man was already drunk. His eyes were blazing. He was still unsatisfied. He wanted more moonshine booze.

"Said he'd see you later, hey?" said Sniper with inward satisfaction. "All right, guy, I'll buy you a drink."

This man and Sniper talked snow-shoveling and booze. Meanwhile Sniper's intoxication increased. Joe failed to reappear, however, and at last McFale left the informer in a state of utter drunkenness, sprawled in a chair. Somewhat unsteadily, Sniper went into the street.

"That li'l bum's gittin' drunk right here on Seneca Street," he muttered, "an' shootin' his roll. I'm goin' to connect with 'im an' git 'im."

He made his way toward Abraham's place; but, recollecting the words that he had had with the Jew on the previous evening, he went instead into Izzy's. Izzy slowly shook his head at Sniper's request.

"Dot is someding I don't hendle," he explained. "But dere iss a man up der street——"

Sniper went into Sammy's and then into Benny's; but in neither of the two establishments could the article of which he was in search be procured. But Sniper was in a persevering mood. He visited Jakey, whose place was almost directly opposite the Barrel House. Jakey was a young, smooth-shaven, keen-eyed, hook-nosed, alert-looking man. In response to Sniper's half-whispered request he looked the applicant over very carefully. Then, opening a drawer, he exhibited a .38 caliber revolver of an old-fashioned type. The ex-soldier examined the weapon, lock, stock and barrel; cocking it, half-cocking it and twirling the revolving chamber.

"Twelve dollars," said Jakey softly, "with a box cartridges——"

Sniper put cartridges into the chambers and shoved the loaded weapon into his hip pocket.

"I'll git 'em all," he muttered in mad frenzy. "That li'l' bum, the guy with the hook an' that wop that beaned me with the club."

BROOKLYN JOE, having left Whitey's with an "I'll see ya later" —which didn't promise much—to that lounger on whom he had spent the half of his two dollars, proceeded directly across to the shop of Abraham and bargained with the Jew for the sale of his suit.

"Yu've got dem ol' rags dat I give y'u, ain't y'u, Abey?" inquired the hobo plaintively. "Y'u ain't had time ta give dem away ta no bum, hey? I'm on de bum again 'meself, Abey, an' y'u kin give dem back ta me. Den I'll sell y'u de suit back."

Two dollars was the sum that Abraham offered Joe for the repurchase of the suit. Joe, crestfallen and almost pleading, stuck out for three. Abey, however, was master of the situation inasmuch as he held Joe's discarded clothing—"relievers," as such articles are termed in the trade. Also Abey recalled Joe's merciless bargaining, and the Jew's heart was hard. Joe realizing these things, took off the nobby little suit

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and handed it back to Abey with a sigh. Then the little hobo donned the old rags.

"Y'u might as well gimme back de ol' kicks an' buy back dese good ones, Abey," concluded Joe. "It'll save me a trip back here ta see y'u."

Abraham allowed Joe a dollar on the shoes.

The hobo, having no wish to return to Whitey's, where an importunate lounger awaited him, visited Shorty's.

"Gimme a shot."

Shorty looked Joe over. He was ragged—garbed much like a tramp—but he wore a good hat, a white collar and a silk tie.

"De guy's all right, Shorty. He worked on de snow."

Joe looked about. He discovered—red-faced, eager-eyed, his very attitude a prayer for a drink of whisky—the man who had taken up the collection for his bed on that fateful night in the Anchor flop. Joe's honest heart warmed at once toward his benefactor.

"Guy," he said, "come over an' have a drink. I'd never toin y'u down in a millyun years."

THE scene in the Barrel House defied adequate description. About the big stove sat a group of men, hunched on the chairs. Men with incipient insanity in their eyes. Men who had saturated themselves with moonshine booze of the vilest type, who had eaten nothing for days except some soup made chiefly from refuse and served free by Tony, the proprietor of the Barrel House.

These men were wolf-like, starting spasmodically from the chairs whenever a stranger entered who could exhibit the faintest indications of an ability to buy a drink. Several of Paddy's beer-drinking customers were in the throng—cheerless, jobless, sodden with moonshine.

In front of the long bar a number of booze-maniacs were disporting themselves in appropriate fashion. They danced wildly, yelling incoherence and singing ribaldry. There was neither grace nor rhyme nor reason to one single phase of their excitement.

Behind the bar stood a short, squat, red-faced man, measuring out poison for a dime a shot. Beside his cash register hung a policeman's club. Hooky strode importantly up and down, a sneer on his bloated face, at intervals walking to the bar to get his shot—a formidable figure, swinging his hooked right arm.

Into this atmosphere entered Sniper; unobtrusively, stepping softly up to the bar, laying down money for his shot. The Italian, recognizing Sniper, smiled slightly. The man whom he had trimmed was coming back to his place to buy a drink. It must be true, the way many Italians characterized the native Americans. They were dumb. Suckers.

Tony served Sniper with moonshine. Hooky also recognized Sniper and grinned evilly. The ex-soldier stood silent at the bar, drinking.

When an idea, or a duty, or something clamoring for accomplishment, is so deeply imbedded in a man's breast as to have become an obsession—so long as such theme is held uppermost in that man's thoughts, it is difficult for him to get drunk. Rather—it is easier for that man to get drunk without exhibiting the ordinary signals of inebriation.

Now as a matter of fact, Sniper was drunk; but his state of drunkenness had been deliberately erected upon the foundation of desire for revenge. The fact that his money had been stolen in this place and the very clothes stripped from his back, and the fact that his own partner had seemingly refused to give him a chance to recover his own property, had made Sniper mad.

He was mad through and through, with a concrete and all-pervading madness, that had been inflamed and magnified out of its due importance by the poison he had drunk. Some crash must come, some climax be precipitated, before the soldier's nature could be satisfied.

Sniper continued drinking, standing silent at the bar. Then, through the soft drink mad-house, daintily, heedlessly, trippingly; expensively-clad, indifferently pushing the carousing maniacs out of the way, walked two women, making their way toward the back room. To Sniper, standing apparently sober at the bar, they gave a nod of invitation as they passed. Sniper was far from being well-dressed, but there was that about him that suggested the presence of money.

From such a source, however, in his present mood, the ex-soldier was utterly unassailable. Sniper was seeking revenge—not women. He returned a cold indifference

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to their encouragements as they passed into the back room and closed the door.

Still pondering how best to accomplish the destruction of Tony, Hooky and Joe with the least element of risk to himself, he joined the crowd of loungers and sat on a chair by the wall. To kill people openly in a public place was too extreme a proposition even for his moonshine-disordered mind. Some plan must be formulated whereby he could get Hooky and Tony together, out of sight of the gang. Joe could be found and disposed of later on.

Sniper had been half-drunk that morning when he had awakened. During the day he had drunk considerable. He had eaten nothing. Without food in his stomach, his power of resistance to the moonshine was growing hourly less. Moreover, the powerful poison that Tony sold was especially demoralizing.

It was one of Hooky's practices carefully to observe the pocket into which a customer thrust his change when drinking at the bar. Such vigilance was often rewarded by opportunity. Sniper had placed his money in his right-hand vest pocket within easy reach, never dreaming that, with such a definite project on his mind, he would fall asleep. He blinked a couple of times, roused himself, experienced a vague feeling that in some manner he ought to protect himself by temporarily leaving the Barrel House. Then suddenly Sniper's head dropped gently on his breast. He dozed. But he was virtually sitting on his gun.

WHEN Sniper awoke it was night. The orgy in front of the bar had died down. Trade was duller than usual. But the big old-fashioned bar-room, formerly fitted with pool and billiard tables, was now half-filled with drunken men; some squatting on chairs about the stove, others lying prone and snoring on the dirty floor in a state of absolute intoxication. The picture was infernal. Never—even in years gone by when the Barrel House was a legally recognized institution—had such utter abandonment to uncontrol been exhibited there.

Sniper, drifting gradually back to consciousness after his nap, strove for a mental grip on time, place and events. His disordered understanding slowly connected with the proper sequence of these. Then his hand dived mechanically into his vest pocket. His money was missing.

The sudden realization of that fact struck the ex-soldier like a lash. He had been robbed again—robbed twice in the same place. Whether that leering, red-faced rascal Tony was responsible for the theft, or whether Hooky was the culprit, or whether his hard-earned dollars now lined the pocket of one of the wallflowers that lounged about him, it was impossible for Sniper to determine. At any rate, he needed a drink and he had no money. It was a horrid situation to be in.

Suddenly Sniper's hand leaped frantically to his hip pocket. Ah! His gun was still there. It was fully loaded—a deadly asset. Should he hold up Tony at the point of the gun and demand reimbursement for everything that had been taken from him? Should he kill both Tony and Hooky at the least show of resistance and shoot his way to safety if any one attempted to block his retreat? He hesitated, gripping the gun's butt, striving to spur his alcoholized wits into competent activity.

Loud laughter in the back room caused Sniper to lean forward and listen. Momentarily he forgot Tony and Hooky and Joe and the loss of his money on account of the sudden and remarkable suspicion that flashed into his brain. He continued listening, almost breathless. The laughter was repeated. The mirthful accents were those of men and women, blended.

The dishonorably discharged soldier of the United States drew himself slowly erect in his chair. Every fiber of his little body became as tense as the cord of a drawn bow. He forgot the diabolic moonshine. His madness dropped swiftly back to the hellish environs whence it had sprung. Sniper was sobering. His manly attributes were forging again to the front. Again he saw himself as he had been in days gone by—a unit of his country's defense standing at attention, gun at the order, awaiting his company commander's word of command. Those days had brought out every ounce of the manhood that was in him.

Today—well, the moonshine had discredited, dishonored him. He had lost the privileges of citizenship. He, who had been cited for conspicuous bravery in the Forest of the Argonne!

Sniper crouched, still listening. Was it possible that God was going to be good to

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him—his country's outcast? Was he—a common soldier—about to live a drama? Was it possible that he could retrieve that greatest thing of all that he had lost?

Tony, a cigar clamped between his jaws, his lips compressed in an oblique sneer, carrying a tray of his poison, opened the door leading to his back room and stepped inside. Sniper, breathlessly leaning forward, caught a fleeting glimpse of the room's occupants. He saw a tall, slim man and a short stout man, sitting and drinking and laughing with two women. The quartet was dressed in the latest style.

JOE went to Abey's shop and disposed of the last relics of his one-day splendor. He removed his hat, shirt, collar and necktie. In place of these he put on his old black shirt and cap. Abey paid him the sum of twenty cents.

"Dat'll buy me two shots," muttered the hobo. "Den I'm on me way. I'll cop a blin' outa dis boig. De guys tol' me if I hit de moonshine I'd blow wit'out a pair of sox. I t'ink I'd better breeze now before I git col' feet."

Joe grinned as he crossed to the Barrel House, wearing identically the same garments as those in which he had worked on the snow. The nature of these garments readily determined him a tramp. He did not see Sniper when he entered. Sniper was sitting crouched in the shadow, facing the back room. Joe, approaching the bar with money in his hand, suddenly caught the bloodshot eyes of Hooky fixed on him with a wicked stare. Hooky's thoughts, inspired by the tramp's size, physiognomy and clothing, suddenly had leaped backward twenty years. The cripple's alcoholized memory at last had bridged the gap.

Hooky's brain worked swiftly toward the end of encompassing Joe's downfall with the least risk to himself. He shouted to Tony, who, having returned from serving the occupants of the back room, was again behind the bar:

"Here's the guy I was tellin' y'u about! Shot his roll in the other dumps. Peddled his front an' shot that! Now he's comin' over t' the Bar'l House an' bummin'."

Tony, drunk on his own moonshine, sneering, arrogant, secure in the protection of the enforcement agents who, even at that moment, were disporting themselves with women behind the closed door of his back room, responded to Hooky's denunciation by seizing the club and jumping over the bar.

"You-a bum in my-a place?" he screamed. "Spen'-a the monee in odder place, hah? Geet out, you-a bum!"

Brooklyn Joe, astonished at the sudden, vicious and unjust accusation, quite innocent of any intention to "bum" drinks in the Barrel House—nevertheless turned quietly about and walked toward the door. He was not seeking trouble. He was merely looking for a drink for which he had the cash to pay. The little hobo's right hand already was on the door knob when the Italian, overstepping in his drunken arrogance all bounds of reason and humanity, struck Joe upon the shoulder with the club.

In a flash the injustice of this blow brought Joe's blood to the boiling point. Tony had miscalculated his man. He was dealing with no slothful city stew bum who would cringe and ignominiously retreat when threatened or struck. Joe's was a roving, untamed spirit. The instinct to fight to the death when abused and cornered was as truly bred in him as among the denizens of the wild.

Joe whirled on Tony. Like a flash. The astonished Italian felt for an instant the body of a little demon pressed against him; felt the club twisted from his hands; saw it flung across the floor. Then Joe struck suddenly, hard. Tony fell against the burly form of Hooky. Both aggressors were for the moment discomfited on account of the suddenness and unexpectedness of the tramp's resistance. Blood flowed from Tony's broken nose.

Those of the drunkards who were sufficiently sober to glean a mite of the significance of the happening, stared stupidly, some of them rising excitedly to their feet and standing watching. The Sniper turned from his vigil before the closed door of the back room, for the first time catching a glimpse of his little partner clothed as formerly in the rags of the road. The ex-soldier's rage bubbled over. He rose from his chair and took a couple of steps toward Joe, threateningly.

"You li'l' bum!" he shouted hoarsely. "W'at did you do with my front, hey?"

"I give it back ta de Jew w'ere I got it," responded Joe stoutly. "Now y'u an' him kin fight it out tagedder—see, Sniper? Y'u ain't got nuttin' on me, bo!"

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Sniper hesitated, fingers clamped about the butt of the gun in his right hand hip pocket. He realized that Joe was right. Though he had purchased stolen property from the Jew, not knowing it to have been stolen, he had nevertheless subsequently resold it to the party from whom he had bought it. The status of the case was thus exactly where it had been before.

Sniper's intention to slay wavered. The moonshine madness no longer was sweeping through his veins. He had slept and his spirit was calmer. His rage against the hobo, however, was only partially abated. Had not Joe gone out sporting, in *his* front, with the two women? Sniper ground his teeth in recollection of the ignominy that he had suffered.

"Ain't y'u gonna t'row that li'l' bum out, after hittin' y'u, Tony?"

Hooky feared that the quarry was about to escape. Goaded by the cripple's half-sneering interrogation and wild with rage over having been struck in the face by an insignificant bum in his own saloon, the Italian suddenly threw himself at Joe.

Sniper stood irresolute. He could, at that moment, have avenged himself upon Tony, Hooky, Joe—any one, or all, of the three. But the noxious effect of the moonshine was abating. And Sniper had had a vision of regeneration. His brain was battling against doubt—seeking to learn its clear duty and to do it.

The door to the back room opened. Two men—expensively and lavishly appareled, one tall and slim and the other short and stout, attracted by the noise of the disturbance—stepped into the bar. Behind the forms of the men could be seen the startled faces of two women—painted, vampish and dissipated faces out of which gleamed mocking black eyes. Sniper's face suddenly set into hard lines. His gun, leaping from hip pocket, was leveled at the two dry agents.

"Han's up, you bob-tails, or I'll drill you!" he warned shrilly.

"Sniper!"

Four ringed and manicured hands shot immediately into the air. Two round, sneering, well-fed faces went suddenly pasty-white. Sniper's eyes blazed.

"I got bobbed on account o' you, you no good ——!" the ex-soldier was shouting. "Now I'm gonna get you, an' you're goin' to serve that time in Alcatraz, too!"

The women screamed, after the manner of their kind. One rushed at once to the back window, frantically smashing the glass with her gloved hands and calling:

"Police! Police!"

Rat-a-tat-tat! Rat-a-tat-tat! came a prompt but distant signaling of night sticks on the pavement.

Meanwhile Tony was desperately grappling with Brooklyn Joe. The Italian and his crippled henchman, Hooky—both drunk and raging against the unlooked-for temerity of the little tramp—had not observed the drama that was being enacted before the door of their back room.

"Let me slug 'im, Tony! Let me slug 'im!" panted Hooky, his hate at last mastering his discretion.

The Italian, hissing furious anathema through clenched teeth, was trying to claw the hobo's face. Joe, breaking from the clinch, struck again. Tony groaned. His nose was being battered into pulp. Hooky, utterly reckless now and fearful of the little tramp's escape, was circling about and swinging viciously at Joe with his hook. Alcoholic insanity gleamed out of his bloodshot eyes.

The loungers, timid as sheep, watched the unequal struggle. They saw one little man fighting two bigger men. They saw the frightful lunges of Hooky's hook, but they made no movement to interfere, leaving the stout-hearted little man to his fate, after the manner of their kind.

The woman who had called for the police had returned to the side of her sister in waywardness. Both stood, pale and trembling, gazing at the hold-up of their escorts; but with eyes that swerved repeatedly, insistently and admiringly to the spectacle of a little man fighting against odds—the little man they had robbed and laughed at, but at whom they no longer laughed or looked contemptuously. Instead, a flicker of remorse had come into their mocking, hard, black eyes; and the inevitable glint of admiration that they of their sex must feel for a man who can fight.

Sniper, holding his gun against the two drys, nevertheless, impelled by curiosity, turned his head enough to see the points of the unequal struggle. The soldierliness in Sniper's heart began to upbraid him. After all, Joe had been his partner—and a staunch, true little partner Joe had been until the dispute over the front had driven a wedge between them.

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Could he stand idly by and see his partner beaten down, mutilated, by those two scoundrels who had robbed him—that saloon-keeping bully and that drunken fiend with the hook? Sniper, gazing out of the tail of his eye and observing the splendid fight that Joe was putting up against heavy odds, felt all his anger against Joe suddenly vanish.

"Buddy!" he called. "Can you git away with it? I got these two bob-tails covered, an' if I lose the drop, they'll git me. But if you say so, I'll git that ginney an' the guy with the hook!"

The little tramp heard, looked and calculated. His intelligence, working flash-like, informed him that Sniper had at last cornered the two military prisoners who had escaped from his custody in the Presidio of San Francisco. Joe called out gamely, clenching his teeth:

"Dat's all right, buddy! Y'u keep dem udder guys covered. I kin hol' off dese!"

Sniper, anxiously watching, muzzle of the .38 held firm and unswerving against the freedom of the two enforcement officers, nevertheless blinked momentarily and sidewise at Joe. The two dry dicks were standing, hands thrust in the air and faces pale, notwithstanding the moonshine they had drunk, their eyes battling for an opening against their little captor. In this—the most dramatic and critical moment in his whole career—Sniper, notwithstanding his recent debauch, did not falter.

"Buddy!" he shrilled again. "Jist say the word an' I'll drill them two guys——"

"Keep de gat on de dicks!" answered Joe. "I kin hannel meself——"

The little tramp dodged a furious swipe of Hooky's terrible right arm. The cripple was clumsy. He was big-boned. He was ox-like. But any single one of the slashes he aimed at Joe would have ripped the little hobo from top to bottom.

The two sartorial exquisites, the two social paragons duly paid to make the country safe for democracy—still were standing with hands held in the air. Two women of the underworld, their painted faces pale and no longer mocking, stood behind them. The dishonorably discharged soldier of the United States, trying to retrieve the citizenship of which those two dry agents had robbed him, held his trigger finger uncertainly against the trigger of his gun.

He could kill. That fact was patent. At that moment he was master of the destinies of all present. But the spark of Sniper's regeneration had begun to flare. He had a vision of himself again, an honorable, sober soldier of the United States, standing, gun at the order, awaiting his company commander's word of command.

Sniper, in that unalcoholized moment, seemed to know what a man was, is and can be. And yet, the clear grain of his duty seemed to have been cloven in two directions. To reconstruct himself upon the basis of citizenship, he must keep the two dry men covered until he could deliver them to the law or to military control. But that attitude, selfish to a degree, acted sternly against the interests of his little partner.

At that very moment that bulldog-faced little tramp, practically penniless, almost on the point of being ousted from the most degraded of all the soft drink places in Buffalo, had his back against the wall. Sniper had worked side by side with Joe in the most bitter weather. He knew that the little tramp was unqualifiedly game. His emotion suddenly spilled over.

"Joe!" he yelled. "I'm gonna bump them guys! Jump out o' the way!"

"Naw! I kin hannel dem meself!" snorted the tramp sarcastically. "Keep de stools covered, Sniper!"

The ex-soldier stood on the peak of uncertainty. His personal animus against Tony and Hooky and his suddenly-renewed friendship for his partner Joe were drawing his aim from the two enemies whom he had been wanting for years.

But Hooky was panting from his exertions. His system, for years rotted with moonshine, could not stand the strain of a protracted battle. Desperately he made a final lunge at Joe who, at that moment, jerked Tony forward to his knees. The cripple and the Italian sank suddenly to the floor while the enforcement agents gasped and the two women screamed again, half-fainting, and the loungers, fast sobering, were strangely silent. Joe, poised on the wings of prospective flight, ran into the arms of a policeman.

Two dead men lay on the floor. The cripple's desperate effort to strike Joe had cost him his life. And it had also cost Tony's life. Hooky's heart had stopped beating, but his hook was buried deep in the Italian's brain. The blood, seeping

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from the cripple's bloated face, revealed the facial lineaments of the brakeman whom Joe had avoided for twenty years. The little hobo saw and understood.

"Dat's de guy, Paddy! I saw 'im t'row somet'ing behind y'ur bar de night y'u got pinched!"

Two men had entered at the heels of the policemen—the big proprietor of Paddy's Place and one in overalls.

"I'd have told y'u before, Paddy," the latter was mumbling, pointing at the still, dead form of Hooky, "but I got drunk on this —— —— moonshine."

ON THE morning of December twenty-fourth, Police Magistrate Benson, having tried fifty-one cases of drunkenness and allied offenses, at last delivered himself of the following:

"I am a native American. My father, grandfather and great-grandfather were native Americans. For thirty consecutive years I have adjudicated on this bench. I am impelled to say that I am utterly amazed and confounded at the daily parade of alcoholics before this Court. It seems that an enacted law has led us into an era of moonshine madness. On every side I observe contempt for and defiance of a constituted law. Perhaps we have brought into our midst that which can not be assimilated—that which desires not to be assimilated. Perhaps even our own fundamental spirit has swerved from the Jeffersonian path. Be the cause what it may, I fear we are slipping from democracy. Let the young blood of America take note of these things and correct them before it is too late."

The dignified old judge—white-haired, weary and careworn—then adjourned Court.

Sniper and Brooklyn Joe were dejected men. Joe had been discharged on account of lack of evidence of responsibility in connection with the deaths of Tony Rossi and John O'Day. Witnesses proved that he had acted only on the defensive.

Sniper had been fined the sum of one hundred dollars for having carried a concealed weapon. The Court had accepted his receipt for the money, anticipating a like sum that was due him by the United States for having returned two escaped convicts to military control.

Sniper was upbraiding Joe.

"How d' you git that way?" he muttered. "You wouldn't even testify against them skirts that trimmed you, hey?"

Joe was silent. The chivalrous spark in his nature had held him from placing a charge against the two women who had robbed him. Their lawyer had looked astonished when uncalled upon to defend a charge. The women themselves had stared curiously at Joe.

"Sniper," said the little hobo, "I'm gonna hit a blin' fur de big boig. I'm gonna see me mudder tamorra, on Crismus day."

"I ain't strong on train-ridin'," lamented Sniper. "But kin I go with you?"

"I'll take ya dere," promised Joe. "It's bum wedder ta ride, but we'll git dere all right."

The men were walking resolutely down the street. A messenger, running up, touched Joe's arm, handing him a sealed envelope.

"There ain't no answer," he said, backing away.

The little hobo, looking curiously at the envelope, finally tore it open. He found five ten-dollar bills.

"De skoits," he muttered. "Dey was sorry dat dey trimmed me. Dey wants ta square demselves, hey, Sniper?"

The dishonorably discharged soldier of the United States looked at his little partner.

"Guy," he said frankly, "I like you. You got more sense an' more guts than me."

Joe blushed.

"We'll go ta Seneca Street an' front up a li'l'," he promised. "We on'y got fifty bucks atween us, but fur fifteen apiece we kin git somet'ing better dan we got. Den we'll have ten apiece ta hit de cushions ta N' Yawk."

Sniper stared at Joe.

"You mean you're gonna split with me?" he asked.

"Sure t'ing."

"Do you know that I had it under me cap to bump you, w'en I was boozed up?"

Joe grinned.

"Dey's lots uv guys dat's tried ta bump me," he retorted.

PADDY, opening his door, called to two men walking along Seneca Street. He counted out fifty dollars and put the money into Sniper's hand.

"Ye've done me a serrvice thot I'll niver forrget," he assured the ex-soldier. "Wid

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the arrist iv thim two fake dhrys, the case against me dhrops. I could niver be prosecuted wid such dishcredited ivvydince."

Paddy produced from somewhere a bottle bearing the seal of the United States Internal Revenue Department. He winked at Joe and Sniper.

"Shure, *Mutt* an' *Jeff* overrlooked the good shtuff," he said whimsically. "Now we'll have joost wan. Wan glass of good liquor won't do anny mon anny harm."

Paddy broke the seal and poured real liquor into three glasses. Joe and Sniper looked at each other, smiling.

"I'll go to Washington an' git permission from the Secretary of War to hitch up again in the outfit," declared Sniper. "I caught the guys that got me bobbed."

"I'll see me mudder an' maybe quit de road," mused Joe.

Sniper was calculating how much he would have to pay Abey to buy back his front. Joe was also preparing to drive a hard bargain with one of the second-hand store merchants.

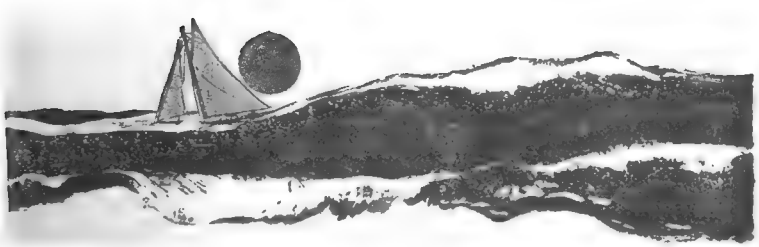
"Ten fur a benny," he was figuring. "Ten fur a suit, ten fur kicks an' a lid an' a collar'n hames——"

FLOWER OF THE MORNING

by Bill Adams

TELL them when I'm gone, then,
Say, "He was glad to go."
Say, "He heard a ringing voice, a great wind blow."
Say, "He'd always wandered in a sort of maze."
Say, "His life had puzzled him, through all its days."
Say, "He knew that this would bring
An end to wonder:
Flames of light, and songs a-wing,
And doubting trampled under."

Tell them,
"Death is but a birth,
A burst of flowers,
Fairer than the blooms of earth
Its beauty ours."



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Author of "Up the China Sea."

CRAWFORD snuffed the candle on the table beside him, turned the page of his book, and went on reading; he felt the loneliness of Pentagoet. In the wide hearth crackled a new-laid fire. Outside, the trees groaned frostily, snapping in the night-wind.

The room showed an amazing mixture of civilized culture and savage magnificence. Candle-tray and snuffers were of chased silver, beside the wine bottle on the table was a heavy gold chalice, above the fireplace hung crossed Toledo blades, and books shone brown in a corner case. The light flickered on a careless pile of beaver and elk-skins in one corner. Other skins strewed the walls, mingled with belts and "arms" of wampum or beadwork. A rack on the mantel held several pipes, all of Indian make; one was a large calumet of white stone girded with silver, a pipe heavy with fate not yet fulfilled, and the lives of men. A tomahawk on the mantel had a string of black wampum about the handle, several dried scalps woven in among the wampum shells.

So much for the room. The man presented that same singular combination of savagery and refinement. His face was long and thinly chiseled, his eyes wide and heavy-lidded, his mouth large, humorous, dangerous. He was of medium height; in the firelight his hair shone reddish, and lines of hardship touched his face with stern self-mastery. A beaver coat wrapped him to the waist. Against stiff buckskin nether garments stood out a long, sheathed knife and a slender, deadly tomahawk; beaded ceremonial moccasins, far too large for him, encased his feet. Before the blazing fire were drying his own moccasins, stuffed out with rags, still steaming as if soaked with wet snow or water. His hands, resting on book and table, were large and powerful, the wrists showing half-healed scars of manacles.

Crawford put out a hand to the pipe beside him, filled it with kinnikinick from the bag, held it above the candle. He relaxed again in his chair, puffing, but his eyes went to the door and then he took the pipe from his mouth, listening. Those eyes of his were startling in their alertness—light-blue eyes that fairly stabbed. His wide lips smiled, as if at his own alarm.

"The shore ice grinding, that's all," he murmured. "Folly to feel nervous here! I wish that Micmac would bring the cold pasty he promised me. Wine on a stomach that has seen no food in two days is a hollow mockery."

Rising, Crawford crossed to the door and swung it open.

He stood for a moment on the threshold,

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staring out at the night. Stars blazed in the dark sky. A dozen feet outside the house ran the black line of a palisade, broken by an open gate directly in front of the doorway. From where he stood, Crawford could see the abandoned lines of old Fort Pentagoet to one side, and beyond this the long white line of the ice-rimmed shore; Penobscot Bay was not frozen over, and the dark swishing of waves mingled with the creaky whine of trees and the grind of ice.

"A lonely place for a baron of France!" said Crawford, puffing at his pipe. "Yet I wish he were here, with his Indian wives and his henchmen. —— take this solitude! I've had enough of it. Why couldn't he leave more than one solitary Micmac on the place?"

He shivered, turned, closed the door, and went back to his chair. He took up his book and opened it—then his head lifted and he looked again at the door. He caught a new sound, the scrape of a stiff moccasin, a low groan, the fumble of stiff fingers at the latch. The door swung open.

Into the room came an Indian, wrapped in furs, holding in both hands a great silver dish. He advanced a step into the room, kicked the door shut, stood motionless. While Crawford stared at him, a frightful expression of horror leaped across his brown face—then the dish fell from his hands, he pitched forward, lay outstretched. The long shagreen handle of a knife stood out from between his shoulder-blades. The knife must have caught him an instant before he opened the door. Perhaps it had been aimed at Crawford's figure.

Crawford sat motionless. For a long instant the thing seemed incredible, uncanny, supernatural. He knew that except for this Micmac and himself, the establishment of Baron de Saint-Castin at the head of Penobscot Bay was temporarily deserted. No war-parties were afoot hereabouts; the year 1697 had opened with peace to Acadia, at least. Crawford had just come overland from Boston and knew that all was quiet.

Then, abruptly, before Crawford could move, the door was again flung open and a man stood framed against the night, pistol in hand. He grinned at Crawford—a great figure whose clothes were white with ice-rime and snow, his bearded face massive, brutal.

"Not a move, Saint-Castin!" rang out his voice.

Crawford smiled.

"Oh! I thought you were Saint-Castin!" he said.

The other started.

"Eh? What's this? No one about——"

"Oh, come in and shut the door!" said Crawford, and laid down his book. "I'm cursed glad of company. The baron is away, with all his people—gone to visit his father-in-law, Madockawando. Up the Penobscot, I suppose. Where the —— did you come from?"

"From the ——," said the other, and laughed.

Then he whistled shrilly. Two other men joined him. All three advanced into the room, closed the door, stood staring over pistols at the seated figure of Crawford, whose calm attitude puzzled them.

From outside came a shout, then a burst of voices, the stamp of running feet, a sudden flicker of torches. Surveying his visitors, Crawford perceived that the first was obviously in command—his dominant air was beyond mistake. The second man was a burly ruffian, brutish, reeking of rum. The third man was tall and thin, saturnine, hawk-nosed, with a certain air of down-at-heel gentility; his darting black eyes were very intelligent.

"This is not the baron," said the latter rogue, blinking at Crawford. "Not our man at all, cap'n!"

"Correct," said Crawford amiably. "If one of you gentlemen will set that venison pasty on the table, I'd be obliged. I reached here half an hour ago, have not eaten for two days, and am more interested in the venison than in you. If you want the baron, go up the Penobscot and look for him."

"Cool one!" observed the massive leader, and suddenly laughed. "We've lost the quarry, lads! Saint-Castin's away with all his people. Bose, go out and take charge of the looting. Have everything taken to the boats; no eating or drinking until the men are aboard. When you've had your fill, come ashore with one boat and join us here. No one is to loot this part of the establishment until I'm ready. Frontin and I will join our friend here over the pasty—if he hasn't eaten for two days, we've not eaten for three. Go!"

The burly ruffian departed. The saturnine man stooped to the pasty and lifted it to the table, shoving aside the body of the

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Micmac. The commander, thrusting away his pistol, stepped forward to Crawford and grinned widely.

"Well! Your name?"

"Harry Crawford, at your service."

The two men stopped dead still, staring at him. Crawford, faintly amused, smiled.

"Why, ——!" broke out the leader. "Hal Crawford, the pirate! Two hundred pound on his head in Boston!"

"This is not Boston," said Crawford, though his eyes narrowed. "—— take you, stare! I'm for the pasty."

He whipped out his knife and attacked the contents of the battered silver dish. The two men exchanged a glance, then without more ado pulled forward a couple of stools and joined in the assault, knives and fingers ravenously at work.

No word was exchanged, but Crawford was by this time perfectly aware of the profession, if not the identity, of his visitors. During the past forty years the whole American coast, even into Hudson Bay, had been swept by pirates; small fry, most of them, fur pirates, rum pirates, reckless sailormen who would land to sack a town or would lay a ship aboard and count it all in the day's work. Others followed the freebooting trade more seriously and made of it a profession. Of this latter class, thought Crawford, were the visitors. He had somewhere heard the name of Frontin—and presently placed it.

Within five minutes the pasty, among three famished men, had been scraped to the last crumb, and the bottle of wine was empty. Crawford leaned back, refilled his pipe, and surveyed the other two men with a whimsical air.

"Help yourselves to pipes, gentlemen! This house, as the Spanish say, is yours."

Frontin, the thin man, grinned in his saturnine way.

"That is well. May I introduce you to my captain, Vanderberg the valiant?"

"The honor is mine," said Crawford, nodding. "I already recognized Captain Vanderberg. I believe Frontenac has offered five thousand livres for his head? Come, Lieutenant Frontin, you have a chance at fortune! Deliver him to Quebec and me to Boston——"

Vanderberg, who was a jolly rascal of Dutch extraction, bellowed a laugh at this.

"Ho! I like you, Crawford. Finding you here, the baron gone, the house ours for the looting, means our luck has changed. And, ——, we need the change! We were battered by a French corvette, storm-wracked, short of men and shorter of food. We bore up for Boston but were warned off; we had absent-mindedly sacked a Bostonnais off Jamaica, and the good folk had heard of it, so the port was closed to us. We started for New York, but were blown offshore by the gale which has only just abated. So, if Frontin had not known of this place and its chances of loot, food and wine——"

Vanderberg expressively waved one huge paw and went to the fireplace. He took down the white stone calumet. Frontin, his saturnine gaze on Crawford, spoke.

"So you are also on the account?"

"Not at all," said Crawford coolly.

Vanderberg swung around with a heavy stare.

"What? But we heard of you in Boston——"

"Exactly, in Boston," said Crawford. "Having once been a Jacobite in opinion, I took refuge in Massachusetts. There, some months ago, I was recognized, apprehended, and sent to the Barbadoes as a slave. I got away with the help of some buccaneers, but having convictions against the life of a pirate, I made my way to New York.* It was my intention to reach the Iroquois country, certain Mohawk chiefs being my friends. I failed to bribe old Fletcher, however, so he sent me in chains to Boston. I escaped, headed for Acadia and New France, and reached this spot half an hour before you."

Vanderberg exploded a volley of admiring oaths at this tale.

"You have money?"

"I need none."

"Well, you shall join us! I need a second lieutenant."

"You honor me," said Crawford drily. "But, as I have said, I cherish certain convictions against piracy."

"Bah! We shall prey only on the French."

"Unfortunately, I have no quarrel with the French."

Vanderberg stared.

"*Hein?* What has that to do with it?"

"Everything. You will readily perceive that a man who is destitute of everything

*New York under Gov. Fletcher was a haven for pirates and like Boston and Philadelphia, afforded an open market for their stolen wares.

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except principles, would be a fool to abandon his principles."

"The foul fiend fly away with you! Then we shall raid the coast to the south——"

"Unhappily, I have compunctions about letting English blood."

"But you are a pirate, known as such!"

"I have the name, yes, but not the honor of deserving it," said Crawford: "Reputation, my dear captain, is a bubble blown from the pipe of fools; let us disregard it. My quest, or if you so prefer, my urge to freedom, draws me into the north or west; I care not which, so it be into strange lands. Now, if I have need of a ship I am entirely willing to seize any French, English or pirate ship which will further my purpose. I am not willing, however, to seize a ship and kill men merely in order to commit robbery. The distinction may be a trifle subtle to your mind, but there it is."

Vanderberg blinked heavily at this speech. Crawford relaxed in his chair and puffed his pipe alight, quite at his ease. Frontin, grinning delightedly, watched the two men in obvious amusement. Apparently a cynical rogue, this Frontin was not at all the cynic he pretended to be.

"You are mad!" said Vanderberg, beginning to lose his good nature.

"On the contrary," said Frontin, "he is entirely sane. That is a profound truth, my honest captain. Very few men are entirely——"

"Shut up!" snapped the pirate, and turned to Crawford. "Who the —— are you against, then?"

"Nobody," said Crawford calmly, "and everybody."

"But you're a Jacobite."

"I was; I am not. I have perceived the fallacy of giving allegiance to another man and fighting for him. I shall now fight for myself alone."

"Then you are going on the account?" asked Vanderberg, rather helplessly.

"Not at all. I said—fight for myself! Why should I fight for money? Why should I rob and murder, in order to take other men's money and goods?"

Vanderberg swallowed hard.

"You are certainly mad!"

"No," said Crawford. "I am free."

Frontin jerked his stool forward and looked hard at Crawford.

"Now let me have my say," he said, and rubbed his long nose. "You are free, and you are also sane. You are something like Saint-Castin was once, before the king's jackal brought him to heel. I suppose you think that it is a lucky chance that you are here?"

"Something of the sort," said Crawford wondering at the man's manner.

"No; it is a coincidence. You never heard of the Star of Dreams?"

"No."

"Saint-Castin and I got it together, in the old days," said Frontin. "Now, consider! We want you with us, for sensible reasons which will presently appear. We came here for more than one reason—sensible reasons, which lie in the chapel yonder," and he nodded his head toward a closed door. "The cap'n would plunder a chapel, but I won't let him. If you will argue with us sensibly, and listen to reason, we may reach an understanding."

"That is entirely possible," said Crawford, with a slow chuckle at the man's air.

Frontin rose.

"Good! Take up the candle and come with us. We have time to look and talk, while those men of ours fill their bellies and guzzle wine."

Crawford stood up and took the candlestick from the table.

II

CRAWFORD was at once amused, puzzled, interested by these two men.

He saw that Vanderberg was a genial pirate, no more, no less—a brawny ruffian, who was for the moment in good humor, and who could pass swiftly to brute ferocity or brute lust. A man to be met with utmost force, primitive in all instincts, actuated only by an avid greed for gold or gain.

Frontin was different—a Frenchman very likely, a man of high intelligence, capable alike of vicious cruelty and lofty ideals. Vanderberg was the arm that smote, Frontin was the brain that planned the blow. Of the two, the latter was the deadlier.

Frontin crossed to the closed door as if he knew the place well, and, his hand on the latch, turned to look at Crawford.

"You love the English more than the French?"

Crawford shrugged.

"I think not. One buys scalps, the other

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tortures prisoners. I deny them both."

"In order to deny, one must affirm."

"Precisely. I affirm—freedom, since you must have it so. I seek only the chance to be free, to look beyond the horizon, to leave wars and the quarrels of kings behind me."

"Your aim, then?"

"To be myself," said Crawford, a little wearily.

Frontin flung open the door, a laugh on his lips.

"The private chapel of Jean Vincent de l'Abadie, Baron de Saint-Castin. Your cap, cap'n; respect my religious scruples."

Vanderberg grunted, but took off his fur-cap.

Holding up the candle, Crawford gazed upon a small room at the farther end of which was an altar; there was nothing bare there, but all was a glow of color. Pictures, silver candlesticks, a large crucifix, Portuguese reliquaries of walnut with oddly curved glass front and sides, white cloths broidered in gold. The room was bitter cold.

"Keep those itching fingers quiet, cap'n," said Frontin, and stepped forward. Crawford glanced at Vanderberg, who was staring with eyes that glowed lustfully.

Frontin genuflected, then stepped to one of the reliquaries, and from it took a small object. With a shiver, he motioned back to the main room, and Crawford obeyed. The three men came back to the fireplace, Frontin closing the chapel door behind them. He then extended the object which he had brought from the chapel.

Crawford, taking it, saw a five-pointed star six inches in diameter made of soft virgin gold. In the center was set a large emerald, and other emeralds ran out to the points. Some were flawed, others were remarkably clear and deep in color.

"Old?" he asked.

"A hundred years or so," said Frontin. "From Peru."

Vanderberg shoved his bulk between them and clutched the star. He examined it greedily, breathing hoarsely, his piggish eyes glinting in the firelight.

"This is no sacred thing!" he broke out accusingly. "I shall take it. You can have nothing to say about it. I swore to you that I would touch no sacred object——"

"You mistake, my captain," said Frontin, a sudden cold accent in his voice. "Turn it over and you will see the name of the Archangel Michael graven on the back. It was the belief that each archangel had his abode in a certain star, you understand. This was a votive offering. As such, it is sacred. Shall we argue the matter?"

This question came icily. Frontin's hand was at his belt; his eyes met the gaze of Vanderberg in sharply direct challenge. Then the laugh of Crawford cut in between them.

"This theological argument would delight our friend Saint-Castin!"

Vanderberg grunted and shoved the star at Frontin.

"Take it, papist! Now tell him about it."

Frontin bowed, not without a certain courtliness. He turned to Crawford.

"Once upon a time, I went to a certain place with Saint-Castin; on the Newfoundland coast. Indians led us. We found the wreck of an old Spanish ship, well-hidden, or rather, I found it. Saint-Castin was taken ill and could not go to the spot with me. I brought this back to him as a sample of what the wreck contained. Then some Boston fishing-sloops bore down on us, and we had to flee. Later, events drove me on the road of destiny. Saint-Castin was never able to find the spot where the wreck lies, without my help; and he did not have it. Now I am on my way to that place. I shall enrich Cap'n Vanderberg and his men. Come with us and you shall be enriched also. You perceive that our reasons for coming here were sensible. What do you say?"

Crawford stood for a moment in thought.

"Why this offer?" he responded at length. "Why are you so anxious to enrich me? That, as you must agree, is neither sensible nor reasonable."

Frontin laughed gaily.

"No? Then listen. We have seventeen men including ourselves. They are scum of the Indies—negroes, branded men, escaped slaves. They suffer from cold and famine. We officers are two, or if you count Bose, three. We need one other man to keep control in our own hands. They will not go farther north, yet farther north we must go. They fear the French. They shrink from working a ship adrift with ice. But this place supplies us with food, wine, furs. On the Newfoundland coast we shall get cod in plenty; we may pick up an English ship or two, with luck. Is this sensible?"

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"Eminently so," said Crawford. "You need me, it seems. Let's smoke over it."

He picked up his pipe, knocked it out, filled it with the tobacco and willow-bark.

"Suppose you let me take another look at that emerald thing—what did you call it? Star of Dreams?"

Frontin, who still held the star, pushed it across the table. He, too, got a pipe from the mantel and filled it. Vanderberg remained silent, puffing lustily.

Crawford looked again at the star, and perceived a ring at one of the points, by which it might be fastened on a thong. The thing had no great intrinsic value, since few of the emeralds were fine stones, but it held that peculiar beauty which comes of primitive artistry and crude technique guided by instinctively flawless taste.

"Star of Dreams," said Frontin. "It was Saint-Castin called it that name."

"A good name for it," and Crawford nodded. "I think I shall keep it. I like the thing."

Vanderberg, who at most times was somewhat afraid of his saturnine lieutenant, gaped at this remark. Crawford looked up and met the suddenly piercing gaze of Frontin.

"You jest?" said the latter.

"Not at all." Crawford looked again at the star in his hand. "The name and the object appeal to my sentimental nature, awaken poetic fancies in me, I assure you. This thing might symbolize the star of freedom which I pursue. At all events, it makes a certain appeal to me which I can not resist."

Vanderberg grinned.

"So, Frontin! So! Another theological argument?"

Crawford glanced up and smiled.

"Not at all. I do not propose a theft, but an exchange which will be more than even—which will, in fact, be greatly to the advantage of our host's chapel."

He reached inside his shirt and pulled out a thong on which was strung a blazing jewel, which, after unknotting the thong, he laid upon the table. An exclamation burst from Frontin.

"But—this is the Order of St. Louis!"

"Exactly," said Crawford, with a nod. "His Gracious Majesty King James once decorated me with it,* and from a feeling of sentiment I preserved it through many vicissitudes. Now, having abandoned sentiment, kings and other old-world follies together, I am very glad to leave this jewel here. You shall put it in Saint-Castin's reliquary. In place of it I will take the Star of Dreams, as being worth infinitely less in money, and infinitely more in the greatest things, which are intangible. I trust that you will have no scruples in the matter of such an exchange? The Blessed Virgin, or St. Michael, or whoever is the patron of yonder chapel, will certainly profit by the trade. St. Louis for St. Michael—eh?"

Frontin compressed his lips, gazing at the jeweled star. But Vanderberg was also gazing at the same thing, with lustful and incredulous eyes, for in truth it was a jewel of great worth. Then, abruptly, Vanderberg blurted out his mind.

"Ha! Frontin—will you let him make fools of us? Leave the relic where we found it, kill him, and take these jewels. What's to hinder, eh?"

"What, indeed?" murmured Frontin, raising his eyes and looking hard at Crawford. The latter, who was stringing the Star of Dreams on his leather thong, laughed a little.

"Nonsense!" he responded cheerfully, and apparently without heeding the black regard. "Before you two fools could out pistol, cock flint and draw fire, my tomahawk would split the cap'n's skull and my knife be in Frontin's heart. A pity, that, for Frontin is a man of some sense. Nay, I learned knife and tomahawk play from my Mohawk friends, gentlemen! Now, my dear Frontin, if you wish to dispute my wishes in regard to this star, I am entirely at your service."

He leaned back and met the stare of Frontin with an ingenuous air. Frontin burst into a laugh, rose, and picked up the jewel of St. Louis.

"Bah! I am satisfied. Cap'n, don't be a fool; we need this man, and I like him, and the three of us shall gut the galleon of treasure. What are a few jewels, when gold is waiting to be carried off?"

Vanderberg sat back and puffed at the big calumet. Frontin crossed to the door of the chapel and vanished in the little, cold, dark room. Crawford nodded to the big pirate.

"An odd soul, this Frontin of ours! I am glad that he reverences something, for

*Stuart court then at St. Germain.

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it raises him in my esteem. By the way, you made a serious error in hurling a knife into that redskin Micmac. He could have given you some highly interesting information."

"What, then?" asked Frontin, returning from the chapel and closing its door.

"That Saint-Castin was expected home some time this evening. If I were you, I'd send a man or two up the river-trail."

Vanderberg, exploding an oath of consternation and startled dismay, leaped to his feet. But Frontin was already darting for the outside door. Jerking it open, he whistled shrilly. A shout responded, and he turned, his dark face alive with excitement.

"Bose is coming now. Crawford, you ——! If you hadn't told us this——"

"Well, haven't I told you?" Crawford rose, laughing. "There are some Winter garments in the bedroom adjoining. Since we're bound for Newfoundland, I think I'll help myself, and advise you to do the same."

Stepping into an adjoining room, Crawford swiftly provided himself with a large furlined wool capote, hat, and a splendid pair of moccasins. He returned to find Bose and half a dozen men around the door-way, Vanderberg bawling orders at them. Two men with fusils were sent to keep watch over the trail that led up-river, the others were set to work looting the interior of the house. They reported that plenty of supplies had been taken aboard the ketch, anchored in the bay.

The men hurled themselves upon the rooms, rushing down to the waiting boat with loads of everything they found—blankets, weapons, trading-goods, silver, snowshoes, furs. Frontin, meantime, stood on guard at the chapel door, defending it against intrusion, and Crawford watched the man with a trace of admiration. Whatever his real name, despite his dark past history and his present occupation, this Frenchman was adamantine in upholding his principles; and Crawford, whose whimsical talk of principles and convictions was really more true than he cared to admit seriously, found it in his heart to respect and like this Frontin.

In the midst of the ransacking, Crawford heard the plunging bark of a fusil. He whirled upon Vanderberg.

"You're caught. Get your men to the boat, quick! Wait there for me. I'll hold off and gain you plenty of time."

Seizing from the mantel, the large tomahawk which he had retained as his own loot, Crawford darted from the room, leaped out into the snow, and heard the shrill whistles calling the men. A shout came from ahead, around the corner of the buildings and up the river trail; then arose the biting Abnaki war-whoop. Crawford understood that the two men so recently set as an outpost had been encountered by some of Saint-Castin's returning party.

Another fusil banged out its message, another Abnaki yell went barking up into the frosty night. Ahead of him, Crawford saw the two seamen stumbling back through the trodden snow of the trail.

"To the boat, quickly!" he snapped at them, then threw back his head and sent a long, quavering cry of four syllables sounding up through the forest. It was the most feared and dreaded sound that could be heard in French or Algonquin ears—a sound to stop the very heart-beats of Abnaki or Caniba or Malicete warriors, a sound that, coming from the throat of the unknown raiders, would bring Saint-Castin himself to a cautious halt. It was the war-cry of the Mohawks.

"*Sassakouay!*"

It rose fierce and sharp with the true intonation that Crawford's red friends had taught him so carefully, ringing up through the frosty trees, a veritable peal of doom to Algonquin ears.

"*Kouay! Sassakouay!*"*

A distant yelp, like the frightened outcry of a street cur pursued by a mastiff, came from the depths of the forest, then silence. Crawford, smiling grimly, turned about and regained the front of the palisade. He found Frontin waiting there, alone.

"They'll scout cautiously," he said, laughing a little. "We've plenty of time. That Mohawk whoop will hold them back more firmly than many muskets."

"You took a chance that we'd wait for you," said Frontin.

"Not a bit of it. I knew you."

Frontin grinned at that, and the two men were friends.

*See Camp-Fire note.

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III

CRAWFORD could make out little of his new environment until morning, which disclosed the ketch *L'Irondelle** standing east for Cape Sable and leaning over to a whirl of wind and snow from the northwest.

The ketch was a miserable craft. Her foremast was set nearly amidships and was square rigged, with a sprit-sail forward, while the main carried a fore-and-aft mainsail and a tiny square topsail above. She boasted three twelve-pounders to a side, leaked like a sieve, was alive with rats and vermin and was rotten of rigging, canvas and wood from truck to keelson; her sole virtue was speed in the water. As Vanderberg explained apologetically, he had left Jamaica hoping from day to day to get a better ship and augment his crew at one blow, but luck had been against him. He was complacently hopeful of picking up an English ship near Newfoundland, unless a French frigate ran him down in Cabot Strait.

"Those cursed French and English are always fighting in these parts," he declared mournfully, "and one can never tell when a fleet will show over the horizon."

The men forward, under the hulking ruffian Bose, were a hard lot. Some were escaped negro slaves from Hispaniola, some were French, and the remainder were Dutch and English. All had for the past two years been engaged in the savage fighting and raids centering on Jamaica, which had been an open prey to all men since the great earthquake wiped away its defenses and defenders. Most of them were drunk, for during the night Vanderberg had served out rum enough to conceal the fact that he was heading east, and when the accession of Crawford as third in command was proclaimed, it passed the vote almost without comment.

"So long as we have no sun," said Frontin in disgust, "the rascals will hold the course we set and ask no questions. Nine-tenths of them steer by the mark on the card and cannot read the directions. But, my friend, when they discover that we head north—ha! Then you'll see crimson snow. I've told them that we're steering south, and have altered the card in case any of those who can read investigate the matter."

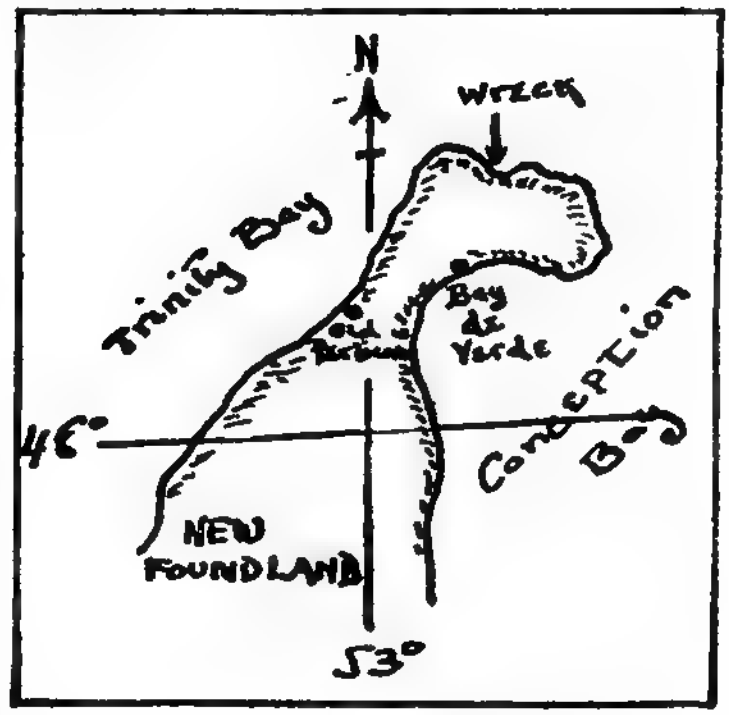
Crawford shrugged.

"Better to meet the thing squarely—but let be. You can navigate?"

"I was once *lieutenant de vaisseau* in his most Christian Majesty's navy."

This was the only time in their long companionship that Frontin ever referred to his mysterious past.

So the *Irondelle* drove east through long hours of gray day and black night, while ever the bitter gale swept down out of the northwest, and Vanderberg matched the shrieking winds with his deep-chested roar. A rare seaman was the Dutchman, knowing his ship as a book and holding her under a press of sail that sent her scudding like a race-horse.



Bitter cold it was aboard the ketch. The men, inured to privations, made no murmur; since the ballast was all in rum from French Hispaniola, the black cook was kept busy through the long hours dealing out hot grog without cessation, and if the men went about their work half-drunk, they had need to be so. The pumps had to be manned continually, their monotonous clacking never coming to an end. Now and again the rotten rigging would give way, and up must go the men to reeve new lines through frozen sheaves; twice the rotten canvas blew out and had to be taken in, mended and patched under the driving snow, sent up again; and the little main topsail blew away altogether and vanished up the sky. At this, Vanderberg bellowed gusty laughter.

"It's a sign we're not bound for ——

*Contemporary spelling, as appears in list of Buccaneer ships, Mémoire of de Cussy, Archives Coloniales, Vol. 1, Paris.

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this cruise, lads! Spell the pumps, lest they freeze, and the rest of you fall to work with axes."

This, indeed, was the sternest job of all, one that had no ending and was dangerous in the bargain. Gripping the frozen life-lines, the men spread out and chopped away the gathered snow and the ice forming thicker every moment. In the night this had to be done with lanterns bobbing, black seas rising up out of the darkness and sweeping the decks, new ice forming as fast as the old was cut away, the blunt bows of the ketch smashing over the roaring seas and a hissing rush of water rising and sweeping away as each sea passed on.

Despite all this, despite their maudlin profanity and half-mad frenzy of exertion, the men were cheerful enough, for this was a new sort of privation to them. Hunger and thirst and burning sun they were all too accustomed to meet. Now they had taken aboard no lack of wine, good caribou meat both frozen and smoked, corn and meal and other viands, furs and warm clothing galore, with no little booty in beaver and small loot.

The gale held through the second day, though the snow had ceased and the bitter cold had lessened, so that it seemed to the men they were indeed heading south.

"So long as they do not suspect, gain no sight of sun or stars, and do not try to use their heads in the matter, all well and good," said Frontin. The three officers were gathered in the stern cabin at noon, leaving the deck to Bose. "They bear Crawford good will, for the way he halted Saint-Castin's redskins and let us get off without harm."

Crawford grimaced. "The good will of vermin is not valuable——"

"Pardon, but you will find that vermin bite!"

Vanderberg shoved into the talk, glaring at Frontin from bloodshot, sleep-lacking eyes.

"Listen to me! We are heading north-east. The chart shows that we shall run into a cape named Sable. What about it?"

"Rest assured." Frontin's hawk-nosed, bitter features were confident. "I know these waters well and need none of your charts, which are not accurate."

"We are in your hands," said Vanderberg, with a nod. "Now tell me just where we are going, for questions are going to be asked before long. That —— Bose already suspects that we're not driving south."

Frontin spilled a little rum on the table, out of the great golden chalice that had belonged to Saint-Castin. With his finger he drew the outline of a promontory.

"This is a point of land half-way around Newfoundland. Here on one side is Conception Bay, on the other Trinity Bay. Here in the end of the point is what the English call a cove—a small harbor, without much protection, therefore without ice. All along the shore are very high cliffs. At one point along these cliffs, near the cove, there is a ledge of rock that extends back into the cliffs like a shallow cave; it is just above high water, and cannot be reached in Summer because of tremendous tide-currents and whirlpools that lie before it. Upon this ledge is the wreck of the galleon, undoubtedly flung there in some furious storm."

Crawford interpoesd.

"Saint-Castin was there before with you; why could he not have come again? Why could not the galleon have been plundered by the English?"

Frontin smiled thinly.

"An Indian report of the wreck drew us there—some hunters had seen it from the cliffs, or thought they had. Saint-Castin was taken very ill, and had to stay aboard our ship. I climbed down to the place from the cliffs, but would not do it again for a thousand pieces of eight. The poor baron was too ill to understand anything about it, and I most certainly did not tell him the truth, so there you are. As for any one else having found the wreck, that is impossible. No English settlements are close by, the wreck is invisible from the sea, and boats cannot come near the place in Summer because of the whirlpools. In Winter, I believe there is sufficient shore-ice for us to land a mile or so from the spot and make our way to it easily. Many ships come with supplies from England for the various settlements, during the Winter, and we shall have no trouble exchanging this craft of ours for a better ship. We shall not be disturbed at the work, as the English settlers stay close at home in the Winter, except the hunters who seek caribou inland."

Vanderberg looked doubtfully at Crawford.

"You are content?"

"Me — content?" Crawford laughed

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slightly. "My dear cap'n, I have little interest in this wreck, I assure you. If there is any gold, which I strongly doubt, a bit of it may be of assistance to me."

"The ——! If you've so cursed little interest, why are you with us?"

"Because you are heading north. Two points of the compass draw me; one is north, the other is west. If I had a ship of my own, I would head it for Hudson's Bay; if I were ashore with an open trail, I would head into the west. Since I must temporize with destiny, I am here."

"Sink me if I can understand you!" growled Vanderberg, but Frontin uttered a low laugh.

"Perhaps you will understand him too well one of these days, my cap'n!"

"What do you mean by that?" said the badgered Dutchman, glaring.

Frontin shrugged, and winked at Crawford.

"I am like the Sybil of Cumæ—my meanings show only in the course of time. But the excellent *Irondelle* is plunging heavily; shall we go above, and clear the forecastle of ice?"

The three of them tramped to the deck and Frontin's whistle summoned the weary men.

That night the gale moderated, though the stars did not show, and it had sunk by morning to a light breeze off the land which brought down a rolling bank of fog. After daybreak the wind freshened, and beneath its influence and that of the sun the fog slowly began to shred apart and dissipate.

Crawford was standing watch when, without warning, the ketch suddenly slid through thinning fog into the brilliant sunlight of open day. Behind, the gray wall of fog went writhing down upon the horizon, and off the starboard bow was the morning sun, blazing upon a cloudless sky and a glittering blue sea unmarked by any patch of sail or purple loom of land.

Sudden warmth pervaded the ship, and the watch on deck gratefully relaxed to its comfort. Crawford was standing beside the helm when he saw the man all agape, staring from sea to sky; a shout came from forward, and men pointed to the sun, and there arose a roar of discussion.

"Where away be we going, master?" queried the helmsman. "Ha' the sun changed his bed?"

Crawford chuckled.

"We're bound north for Newfoundland, lad. North for gold and Spanish plate, in a place the skipper knows of. It's there for the taking, and no fighting neither; in and take it, out and sail south again to New York or where you will, and spend the broad pieces. Yet those fools for'ard don't want to go north!"

The helmsman hesitated, then grinned.

"I'm with 'ee, master. Hast a pistol?"

Crawford shook his head and refused the proffered weapon. Knife and tomahawk were at his belt, and he wanted no more. Also, that large tomahawk of Saint-Castin's was nosed into the rail behind him, and he quietly stepped over and secured it. Trouble was close, for Bose and the other men were now on deck, all clustered in an excited knot.

Now the knot burst, and aft strode the hulking figure of Bose, bearded and uncouth as any bear, with the men trailing to right and left. The ketch had but a slightly raised quarter-deck or poop; Crawford strode forward to the ladder of two steps, and waited, secure in the knowledge that the helmsman would not pistol him in the back. The fourteen men came to a halt, sullen and anxious and alarmed, and Bose stepped out a pace, glowering at Crawford.

"Master, we be headed nor'east by the sun!"

"True," said Crawford, his light blue eyes searching into the ring of faces. "We're for Newfoundland, where Spanish gold is waiting for us, and no Frenchmen around to hinder——"

A storm of outcries went up in English, Dutch and French, the protest breaking in an angry wave. Bose flung about, silenced it with a roar, then swung again on Crawford.

"This is a company matter," said he, "and we'll take no orders from you that haven't been voted on. North we'll not go——"

Crawford's eyes and voice bit out at him like cold eyes.

"You dog, you! North you'll go, and the rest of you!"

There was a moment of silence, so shocked and taken aback were they by this speech. Then Bose whipped out a pistol and lifted it.

The next instant it was dashed from his hand, as the tomahawk whirled and glittered and knocked the weapon over the rail.

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Crawford put his hand to the second ax at his belt, and laughed.

"That's it, eh? Now, bullies, who wants it fair between the eyes? Fair warning, lads——"

Bose backed hastily into the crowd, but from the other men came a storm of oaths. Then a huge negro at the right of the gang moved suddenly.

"Down with him!" he shouted in French, and from his hand a pistol roared.

The bullet shaved Crawford's neck and left a red weal to mark its passing; then the keen ax that flamed in the sunlight took the giant squarely between the eyes and sank into the skull, and the negro pitched backward against the bulwark, where he kicked convulsively and died.

"Knife to the next," said Crawford, and took the knife ready for the cast. But the men shrank, for this sort of play was new to them. And as they hesitated, Crawford spat forth an order.

"For'ard with you! The cap'n will tell you of our course and where the gold awaits us; so vote all you cursed please, but don't come to me with pistols out. For'ard with you! Hal Crawford goes north, and you with him!"

Then he leaped at them, catching Bose a buffet that knocked the hulking fellow across the deck. Knives flamed, curses filled the air with wild outcry, and as the men still hesitated, the powerful bellow of Vanderberg arose. The cap'n leaped on deck, with Frontin at his heels.

"What's this?" cried Vanderberg, a pistol in each hand.

"Nothing," said Crawford, turning aft. "I was demonstrating to these good fellows of yours that an Indian ax is swifter than a pistol. The demonstration is satisfactory. If you'll break out a little rum, and tell these lads of the wrecked galleon that we go to sack, the company will vote for the north. Two of you lads throw that black fellow overside and give me that tomahawk."

Vanderberg strode forward. Frontin looked at Crawford, and grinned thinly.

"You've cowed them," said he. "Now watch your back o' dark nights."

"Not I," said Crawford, and pointed forward. "They'll fight for me now. You'll see. They'll be all for the north venture."

And a roar of applause to Vanderberg's tale of gold approved his prediction. Thus easily were the wild, childish men swung to any purpose.

IV

THE *Irondelle* came to rest in a little cove amid beetling cliffs, fast moored and well-sheltered against anything but a blow direct from the north.

She had not reached her goal without misadventure. Off the Banks she had raised three sail of the line, one foggy morning—French frigates, which only her virtue of speed enabled her to escape. Of the thirteen hands forward, one man had slipped on an icy shroud and fallen to his death, another had been knifed in a quarrel; this reduced the total aboard to fifteen. Wilful waste had reduced Saint-Castin's looted provisions to woeful want, the gear aloft was dropping to shreds, there was not a sound line aboard her save those that held her moored off the black rocks, and the entire stock of powder in the makeshift magazine had been flooded and ruined. Yet, because the ballast of rum was not yet exhausted and the lure of gold was before them, the men were willing enough to face the worst. The one redeeming feature was that in the bleak snow-clad land fronting them there was no enemy.

On the night of their arrival in the cove, Vanderberg summoned all hands aft to a council in the cabin. They listened in silence as he laid the situation bluntly before them—fierce, wolfish faces in the lantern-light, haggard with toil and privation, lustful for unearned gold, branded men and cutthroats and wild beasts in the image of God.

"Without powder," concluded Vanderberg, "we are defenseless. Without food, we are powerless. Without gear and canvas, the ship cannot leave here. Without more men, we could not work her south. Before us there is a waste of snow and icy woods—a white desert. One man among us knows this land; let him speak."

All eyes went to Frontin. He, holding a candle to his pipe, nodded his head coolly.

"Good. From that white desert facing us," he said, "we shall get men, provisions, powder, gear, and a ship. Is that satisfactory?"

Some of the men cursed, others laughed. They liked Frontin, for his cool cruelty and his high intelligence.

"If you say so, then it will come to

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pass," said Bose, growling some blasphemy in his beard. "What about the gold?"

"Unfortunately, I cannot be in two places at once," said Frontin. "I propose that we divide into two parties. I shall remain here with the cap'n and four men, to search out the gold and, if possible, secure it. Seven men and Bose, with Crawford in command, will go into the white desert and bring us men, provisions, munitions, and a ship. Eh?"

There was a roar of laughter at this proposal, which was at once put to the vote and passed, amid a flood of oaths and obscenities. Then Crawford spoke up for the first time.

"The snow is deep. You will provide wings for us to cross?"

Frontin grinned. "I brought Saint-Castin's snowshoes for the purpose. You can use them; the others can learn."

"I can use them," spoke up Bose heavily. "I spent a Winter in Hudson's Bay, with the English company."

"Excellent!" proclaimed Frontin. "Now, Crawford, pay attention and you shall learn how this white desert can be made to furnish all we lack. "That is to say, provided your scruples against seizing English goods can be overcome."

Crawford shrugged and tamped down his pipe.

"Self-preservation is the answer, my dear Frontin. I am at your service to command."

Frontin once more drew upon the table-top a crude outline of the iron promontory at whose tip they were harbored. He put his finger at a spot on the west coast.

"Here, as I remember the map, is the English settlement of Old Perlican, in a very good harbor. It is about two leagues to the south of us. Opposite it, here on Conception Bay, is another settlement called Bay de Verde. How large these places are, I do not know, but they are of some size, and are only a few miles apart. I suggest that you march straight down the coast to Old Perlican, which you can reach tomorrow night."

"Ah!" said Crawford ironically. "Then, without powder, and with eight men at my back, I am to attack this town?"

There was a roar of laughter, which Frontin swiftly quelled.

"Not at all. You are to use those brains of yours, my friend! If you have luck, you will find an English ship at either or both of those places. You will find plenty of sheep, cattle, and dried codfish. A prisoner or two, correctly persuaded, will give you full information. At the worst, you will find numerous fishing-sloops, excellent seaworthy craft, into which you may load supplies."

"And bring the whole coast down upon us?"

"Bah! Spread abroad some lies. No one will ever suspect that we are harbored here."

"Very well," said Crawford. "Get out the snowshoes, Bose, and pick your men. If we have no powder, we need not burden ourselves with fusils—so much the better! If we do not return for a week or so, Vanderberg, you have plenty of supplies for six men. If we do not return at all——"

"But you will return," said Frontin with assurance. "You cannot fail."

"Why so?" asked Crawford curiously.

"Because you follow the Star of Dreams."

While the assembled men stared blankly at this, Crawford met the glittering eyes of Frontin, and in that gaze read an almost superstitious conviction. Somehow, he perceived, the Frenchman had been captivated by his words regarding the emerald star; and smiling at the absurdity of it, he rose and left the assemblage to draw lots for places in the expedition. After all, why not? Perhaps this star, which hung on its thong inside his shirt, and which was a good symbol of his rather vague strivings and longings after a freedom that did not exist, had been sent to him as an omen. His half-jesting utterance had become verity.

"At least," he thought as he looked up at the blazing stars above the black cliffs, "it is possible. Frontin is a man who reverences religion, and he believes it. I do not reverence religion, but I reverence God—and I think I believe it also. Well, we shall see! I accept the omen."

Frowning thoughtfully, he sought his narrow berth.

Morning beheld a laughing, cursing, straggling expedition of nine men starting off along the wooded crest of the cliffs. Crawford led the way, a fusil slung over his back and one horn with a few charges of good powder at his belt; behind him followed seven men, with Bose bringing up the rear. As was their custom in all things,

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the buccaneers donned the snowshoes and set forth to sink or swim; and for a while it was a sinking job. They stumbled, tripped, sprawled in the snow, and like the huge children they were, enjoyed the game. The intense cold was invigorating to them; they had food for two days, their leader had enough powder to shoot any game they met, and ahead was the prospect of loot against heavy odds. From the buccaneer viewpoint, the situation was ideal—death at their backs, desperation prodding them forward, all to win and nothing to lose. So the winter-stilled woods echoed back lusty shouts of laughter and wild curses and wilder jests, until Crawford issued an order against too much noise.

The advance was not at all rapid. To most of the men, these crusted drifts of snow were entirely novel—a thing to be enjoyed as well as fought. By noon, Crawford calculated that no more than a league had been covered, and he called a halt, the men promptly starting a furious snow-fight, hurling cakes of icy consistency.

Crawford beckoned Bose apart and took out his pipe. It was that same white stone pipe girded with silver, which had rested on Saint-Castin's mantel; Vanderberg had looted it, and Crawford won it from him over the dice on the way north.

"Give them a bite to eat and a rest, Bose. By night they'll all be done up with *mal de racquette*. I'm going ahead to scout, so follow my trail. Give the men a tale of Indians; whether true or not, it will lend them caution and may keep the rogues quiet."

Bose assented, and ducked a cake of frozen snow that came hurtling for him. Crawford, turning to the south, was gone among the trees.

"A mad situation!" he thought, as he broke trail. "But like all mad things, it has a grain of sense. If one could only prevent the grain from being overborne by the mass!"

He plunged ahead through the woods, bearing away from the open shore and cliffs, since he knew well that the sole hope of success lay in absolute surprize, and he dared not risk being seen by settlers or hunters. Bose and the men could follow his trail plainly enough, and might come along whenever they were able. Crawford was for the moment glad to be rid of them, and unhampered.

No trace of smoke broke the blue sky. After an hour, Crawford knew that somewhere not far ahead must lie Old Perlican, yet he searched it in vain. No slightest indication of human habitation was to be seen anywhere in this world of white snow, upon which the sunlight broke with dazzling splendor. The trees were bowed beneath their load of snow, and there was something terrible about the deathly stillness, for the frost was not intense and the trees were not cracking. This absolute silence of the wilderness was hard on the nerves of one unused to it; the only sound among the thickly-clustering trees was the faint creak and sluff of Crawford's shoes in the crust. Then, with a sudden savagery that brought him to gaping and incredulous halt, a voice lifted out of the dark trees to his left.

"*Sassakouay!*" The gleeful, blood-gloating note thrilled Crawford more than the whoop itself—thrilled him with a sense of frightful things afield.

The Iroquois war-whoop—here in this place! It was absurdly out of all reason. Despite his surprize, Crawford knew well enough that his own presence was unsuspected, or that whoop would never have been lifted. He went forward cautiously, working his way over a crest of higher ground among thick pines, and so came abruptly upon a road that lay below him. Biding there in cover, he scrutinized it.

It was a road beaten deeply through the snow, marked with the wheels of carts* and the runners of sleds; since it ran from east to west, it must be a road from Bay de Verde to Old Perlican. Yet who had uttered that Mohawk whoop, here in this solitude? That was a thing inexplicable.

Only for a moment, however. Off to the left appeared a moving shape—a man, bare-headed, running clumsily, casting frightened glances over his shoulder, tearing off a heavy coat as he ran. A sobbing cry burst from him, directed apparently at high heaven, since it was impossible that he could imagine any one to be near at hand.

"Help! Help! The red devils are on us—help! Ha' mercy——"

Crawford stiffened in a momentary paralysis of utter amazement. From the trees opposite him, and ahead of the English settler, glided a figure which cut off the

*Carts were used throughout the Winter over these woods roads; several were sent to Placentia by Iberville.

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flight of the settler. The figure was cloaked in long blanket-coat and wide beaver hat, but from beneath the brim of the hat peered out hideously painted features grinning at the wretched fugitive.

Here was the source of that Mohawk whoop! Incredible as it was, the thing was true. Crawford saw the redskin deliberately whip out tomahawk and poise for the throw, while the settler, plunging blindly along the road, was ignorant of his doom. Crawford gripped his own ax and, with a swift motion, hurled it—but too late. The other had flung, and even as one blade hit home, the second followed suit. Each man was destroyed by an unseen enemy. Crawford's ax struck through wide hat to brain, and the woods rover plunged forward into the road, without a cry. The hapless fugitive, struck glancingly but no less fatally, dropped in his tracks and the tomahawk spun in the icy road beyond him.

For a moment Crawford waited, searching the farther trees with keen scrutiny, appalled by what had just happened; that the Iroquois could be raiding this country was beyond belief. No sign of any one else could be descried and, as he looked back to the two figures, came the explanation. The rover's wide hat had fallen away to disclose reddish hair. He was no redskin, but a white man, a Canadian—one of those *voyageurs* and *coureurs-de-bois* who had adopted Indian habits, wives and appearance. This explained the Mohawk cry, for many of that clan had settled above Montreal and took the French part against the English and Iroquois.

The English fugitive lifted his bloody head and came to one knee. Crawford broke from his covert and, discarding the snowshoes, ran to help the man, catching him in his arms. A glance showed that the wound was mortal, but the dying eyes widened on Crawford.

"Who are ye?"

"A friend," said Crawford, unwonted kindness in his cold eyes. "I tried to get the rogue before he let fly, but failed. Who is he? What does it mean?"

"English, be ye? On guard, on guard!" A flicker of energy filled the fading voice. "I run away from 'em—the devils are sweepin' the coast! It's Iberville himself, they say—Canadians, Injuns! St. John's captured, burned; they've burned Heart's Content, Havre de Grace, all the settlements! Carbonear Island holds out—whence come you that you know not these things?"

"I landed yesterday," said Crawford.

"Then flee with your ship!" cried the dying man. "There is no rescue—all is slaughter! Old Perlican is burned—sloops burned—ship captured—ship from England at Bay de Verde was taken last night—full of provisions—the Irish slaves have risen against us—murder——"

The man's head joggled forward in death.

So there was war in the land! Crawford stood for a little in thought, astounded beyong measure by this news. He had heard of Iberville ere this; that name was both famous and infamous in New England, for it was Iberville who had raided Schenectady with his Mohawk brethren—a gentleman, an officer of the French navy, a wild adventurer who halted for no odds, a Mohawk by adoption. Such was Pierre le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville.

"So Iberville is ahead of us, eh?" thought Crawford, and his lips twitched whimsically at the thought. "And he took a ship of provisions last night, at Bay de Verde! And what was that about Irish slaves? Poor devils of Jacobites sent over here and branded! Sin me if all this hasn't a significant hint for my ears! M. d'Iberville, I salute you! Now, my Star of Dreams—lead on!"

Pausing only to retrieve his tomahawk and take the fusil and munitions carried by the dead Canadian, he turned about and hastened on the back trail to rejoin his men.

V

IN THE late afternoon, five men sat about a fire on the hillside north of Bay de Verde. Below them was a scene of destruction; the settlers having broken their parole, Iberville was laying waste the little place. Canadians, hardly to be told from Indians, were driving sheep and cattle to slaughter on the beach; the score of log-houses were being pillaged, and already two of the farther buildings were burning fiercely. The hapless settlers, such of them as had not already escaped to Carbonear Island, were being herded into fishing sloops for transportation to Placentia. Lying at anchor offshore was a

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goodly bark of over sixty tons, just from England; she was laden deep with stores, and by the gleam of her canvas and the scarcely battered paint, was brand new. She was schooner rigged.

The five men who had gathered about their fire, trees closing them in on three sides, had obviously participated in the sack of the place. Portions of a butchered sheep were cooking at the fire. Four of the men, busy replacing filthy rags with looted garments, were shaggy of hair and beard, pinched and starving of countenance, and had something the air of wild beasts as they pawed over heaps of stolen articles.

The fifth man was different. He was prematurely gray, his haggard face was drawn with suffering both mental and bodily, and in his forehead had been seared an undistinguishable brand. Yet he seemed of a higher intelligence than the others, who treated him with a certain respect; and having changed his rags for good clothes, he was at work with knife and broken mirror, trimming his wild gray beard into some neatness. One presently observed that he seemed different from the others because of an undeniable cleanliness, which the other four obtrusively lacked.

"Victory and blessings!" exclaimed one of the four, staring down at the scene below. "If we had fusils or pikes, and a *garran* to each one of us for riding, and Phelim na Murtha yonder for the leading of us, it would be plague to the Saxon!"

"True for you," said another, speaking likewise in Irish. "With the knowledge there is with us of this accursed country, and the others of us who are elsewhere, it's a fine stroke here and there we could lay down! Do we join the Frenchmen, Phelim?"

Thus addressed, the gray-haired man lifted his head and regarded the four. In his eyes one saw that his spirit remained unbroken, though his body might be far spent.

"*Facies ut tua est voluntas*," he murmured in Latin, then smiled. "Nay, lads! Join them and gain freedom. As for me, I am broken in body and my right leg will never lose its limp, and the hair is gray that should be black, and the forehead branded—nay! I shall get a sword, and go to Carbonear Island and land among the English, and die there after a last stroke at them."

At this, a voice came out of the trees.

"Well said, Sir Phelim Burke of Murtha!"*

The four men sat staring around, dumfounded. But Phelim Burke sprang to his feet, a wild light in his face, his hands all a-tremble.

"Who called me? What voice is that?" he cried out. "I used to know that voice——"

"D'ye remember Boyne Water, and the king who was a coward, Phelim? And who it was called him coward to his face, eh?"

Out from the nearer trees strode Crawford, laughing a little as he gazed on the five of them. Now Sir Phelim uttered a great cry.

"Harry Crawford—is it mad I am, or a ghost?"

"Try this," and Crawford, leaving his snowshoes, came over the trampled snow with hand extended.

The two men gripped.

"Gad, Phelim, what a meeting is this! All friends here, eh? This is good enough. Tell 'em to down knives before they smite me."

Phelim Burke excitedly addressed the four, who were closing in on Crawford, and they sheepishly relaxed.

"Harry, Harry, this is like a dream!" cried Sir Phelim, tears standing in his eyes. "Two years we've been slaves in this land, wild beasts of burden—art with Iberville?"

"—— a bit," and Crawford laughed. "Nor, as I gathered from your speech—though I've forgotten the Gaelic in large part—are you. I've a pirate craft hidden up the coast. Will you and these men join me, Phelim?"

"Aye, to —— and back!" said Sir Phelim promptly. "I'll answer for them. But I'm a broken man——"

"Don't be a fool," snapped Crawford. "Listen, now! We've small time for talk, since the afternoon is wasting. Is Iberville himself down yonder?"

"Aye, and forty —— of Canadians."

"They are burning the place—there's smoke from another house." Crawford's gaze swept the little harbor. "D'ye know when they are leaving?"

"Not until morning."

"Excellent! I need men, Phelim. Five of you here—can we get any more near by?"

Sir Phelim questioned his four. These, all

*Baudouin makes particular mention of the Irish *gentlemen* slaves as distinguished from the *Irlandois*.

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veterans of the Irish wars who had been taken prisoner and shipped to Newfoundland as slaves, were eager enough to follow Crawford, the more as he was an old friend and companion in arms of Sir Phelim, whom they loved. They said that a number of Irish were roving the woods, and several were thought to be at Old Perlican, to which place a detachment of Canadians had departed, with intent to give it a like fate with that of Bay de Verde.

Crawford whistled, and in came Bose from his concealment among the trees.

"Here are five of our fresh men, Bose, and down yonder the ship awaiting us. Go back to where the men are camped, set out a guard or two against roving Canadians, and after dark bring them on to this spot. Off with you! Now, Phelim, would it be possible for two of your men to cover the six miles to Old Perlican, rouse up any of their comrades whom they may find, and be back here before dawn?"

At this, Phelim Burke laughed as he had not laughed for many a month.

"Lad, these Irish can outrun horses! And with freedom awaiting them, what can they not do? They'll be back an hour past midnight, I promise you. One to Old Perlican, the other three to roam the woods. Iberville has released us all and offered us refuge in Canada, but we'll ship with you."

The four Irish, waiting only to catch up their half-cooked meat from the fire and bear it off to eat as they went, departed hastily. Left alone, Crawford and Sir Phelim settled down by the fire to bring old friendship up to date.

Phelim Burke na Murtha had seen hard fate—his family was wiped out, he himself had been racked and tortured, and the two years here in Newfoundland in bestial slavery to masters who knew no pity had all but finished him; yet the spirit burned strong within him. He nodded soberly to Crawford's almost defiant declaration of freedom.

"Aye, Harry, I'm with you. The world's burned out for me, and I've no heart for the vain mockery that once we loved. Throw all the stars into the bowl of night and pluck one out, and follow it; then, lad, if you'll be burdened with a broken Irisher who seats mad whims higher at table than sense——"

Suddenly Crawford, putting a hand under his shirt, held before Burke's amazed eyes the emerald jewel.

"Here's your star, Phelim—Star of Dreams it's named, and I'll live or die by it!"

He started up, pointed to the cove below.

"Look, man, look! There go more houses to the flames. You're certain Iberville will stay here the night? Then why send the buildings roaring?"

"He'll stay, for he has to await the party back from Old Perlican. As for houses, it's little those wild Canadians care for roofs over their heads, lad! Faith, ye should ha' seen Iberville and his men sweep over that English bark at daybreak, against cannon and musketry! It's fighters they are, lad. Beside them the French are fools."

As the sunset drew on, Crawford heard how Iberville and his six-score Canadian rovers had wiped the Newfoundland settlements out of existence, yet doing it with no needless slaughter. They had come overland from Placentia in the dead of Winter and struck the east coasts like a thunderbolt, nor could the scattered settlements resist them, though there were some hundreds of hunters to swell the ranks of the settlers. The impregnable island of Carbonear alone held them at bay, while those who escaped had fled to Bonavista in the north, which Iberville would attack ere the snows melted.

Crawford in turn told Sir Phelim his own story, and that of the Star of Dreams, and the darkness came upon them while they talked, with the burned houses below glowing as red patches against the star-glistening snow.

"If we can carry off that bark," said Sir Phelim, a new ring to his voice, "then I'll ha' faith in your Star of Dreams, Harry! She's loaded to the gunnel with supplies of all kinds, carries three twelve-pounders and as many culverins, and Iberville has put aboard her a good share of the new-killed meat and the captured cod. What a prize she'd be for destitute men! But they'll have a guard aboard her, and how could we reach her!"

"That's to find out," said Crawford. "They'll not suspect you, Phelim—could ye not find out their dispositions, and where the boats lie on the shore?"

Sir Phelim nodded and rose. He departed limping, by reason of a broken leg that had knit poorly, and Crawford stared after his vanished figure with sorrowing gaze.

"—— take all kings!" he muttered.

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"There goes a better man than any of the Stuart breed he has fought for—yet at forty Phelim Burke is an old man of seventy! And down yonder honest settlers are driven forth and good Canadians are risking life and limb—murder is done and steel cleaving flesh—for what? For the pride of besotted fools who wear gilt crowns. I'll fight, sink me if I don't, but it'll be for my own hand, for my own life, for my own free pleasure. Aye, my Star of Dreams, lead the way! We'll go over the horizon together."

He built the fire up afresh, careless whether it were seen by the French below, and taking out his pipe, smoked in thoughtful reflection. In throwing off all shackles of allegiance, in declaring his quest of freedom, he knew well that he made of himself nothing better than an outlaw; he had no intention, however, of stalking up and down the haunts of men and vaunting himself. He cared nothing for the eyes of other men—he was questing that which would answer to the inner man alone.

One thing he forgot—that every act committed in this world, whether for good or ill, brings a certain reckoning in its train. And now there was upon him the reckoning of an act which he had already forgotten.

The night was warm, the snow-crust was melting, and though the stars were out there was rain in the air. Crawford, as he sat before the crackling fire, heard no sound whatever until a voice sounded at his very elbow in French.

"Do not move, *monsieur!* My brother wishes to ask you a question."

Crawford glanced around, could see nothing, but caught the click of a pistol at cock. Without sign of his surprize, he took the pipe from his lips and laughed shortly.

"Greetings, *mon ami!* You have somewhat the advantage of me. Since I am prejudiced against speaking with unseen friends, may I suggest that you advance without fear?"

A somewhat boyish laugh sounded softly, but it died out into ominous words.

"Your pardon, *monsieur!* This is an affair in which I have no share, save that of curiosity—and compellance. My brother Pierre-Jean Beovilh, the great war-chief of the Abnakis, desires to ask you a question."

While these words sounded at the elbow of Crawford, a man stepped into the circle of firelight opposite him, and came to a halt. Crawford gazed curiously at the visitor, not betraying the acute dismay which seized upon him; he saw a tall Indian, who had flung aside his garments and stood naked to the waist, painted and feathered, the features repulsively ugly and ferocious. As he stared at the Abnaki, the latter spoke to him curtly and without any of the usual preliminaries, in very good French.

"Who are you, who hold in your hand the sacred calumet of the Abnaki, which has a home in the lodge of my brother Saint-Castin at Pentagoet?"

And Crawford realized that the stone pipe in his hand was one which had been taken from the mantel of Saint-Castin, where pipes had stood racked.

VI

CRAWFORD, inspecting the war-chief at whose belt hung fresh scalps, took his time about responding. Suddenly piecing together what he had previously learned and what Phelim Burke had been telling him, he realized his acute peril.

This Pierre-Jean Beovilh had come from Acadia to join Iberville's raiders, was the highest Abnaki chief, and belonged to the now destroyed clan of the Caniba. Saint-Castin, by his marriage to a red princess and his unsanctioned union with many other ladies of color, had constituted himself a sort of vicar-general to the Abnakis. It was highly probable that the sacred relics of the Caniba clan had been deposited with him for safe-keeping, and that this white stone calumet was one such relic, profaned by Crawford's usage.

Now, knowing himself trapped, Crawford took the one open trail—that of audacity. He must know with whom he dealt, for the greatest danger was that the whole Canadian force would be brought upon him. One shot, one yell, would bring them.

"In the *cabanes* of the Mohawk clan of the Iroquois I am known as The Eagle," he said calmly. There was truth in this, though he had never visited the elm-bark lodges of his Mohawk friends. "The Eagle does not talk with cowards who fear to show themselves. Let my red brother call his French friend out into the light."

At the Mohawk name, the Abnaki chief started slightly. Then, answering Crawford's challenge, another figure stepped from the shadows, pistol cocked. Crawford was

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astonished, first to perceive that it was a boy of sixteen, and second by the aspect of this boy. He was handsome as an Apollo, long brown curls framing his perfect features and despite his youth there was a certain air of dignity and command in his countenance. His eyes glinted hard at Crawford as he spoke in French, using the redskin phraseology.

"My white brother has a Mohawk name, but he is not a Mohawk; he speaks with the French tongue, but he is no Frenchman. Let him speak. I am Le Moyne de Bienville."

Bienville—brother to Iberville! Crawford could not repress his astonishment as he regarded this boy of sixteen, accompanying veteran wood-rovers on a raid so perilous and even desperate. And reading the look, Bienville's boyish pride instantly resented it.

"Speak!" he snapped angrily. "Is The Eagle a woman, that he fears to speak to warriors?"

The Abnaki chief, hand on knife, watched Crawford with unwinking gaze.

"The Eagle looks at the sun and does not blink," and Crawford's rare smile leaped out, so that the boy's anger vanished instantly under the implied compliment. "But The Eagle has been asked a question by this snapping cur. The Eagle did not know that the Abnakis had a war-chief; he thought they were women, whom the French Mohawks protected from the wrath of the Iroquois nation. Now let this Caniba dog, whose clan is only a memory among the Abnaki nation, gaze upon this coat which the Eagle wears. Let his eyes rest upon these moccasins. He has often been in the lodge of Saint-Castin; perhaps he will recognize them."

The Abnaki, whose coppery breast was heaving with rage at these words, spat reply.

"They belong to my brother Saint-Castin."

At this, Bienville started slightly and watched Crawford in astonished speculation. The latter puffed again at his pipe, then spoke quietly, deliberately.

"Then let the Abnaki dog go and ask Saint-Castin for an explanation. Or, since he is a woman and a snapping cur at French heels, let him summon his Canadian friends to make The Eagle a prisoner."

Now the fury of the war-chief burst all bounds.

"The war-chief of the Abnakis does not need Canadians to help him lift the scalp of a thieving Englishman, who calls himself by a Mohawk name and speaks the French tongue!"

Bienville, perhaps comprehending Crawford's purpose, attempted to interpose, but the furious chief turned upon him with a flat demand that he keep silent.

"This English thief has insulted me, and holds in his hand the sacred calumet. This is not a matter for Canadians. His scalp is mine, and I claim it!"

Then, whirling upon Crawford, the chief whipped out a knife.

"Give me your scalp, English thief! It is mine."

Now Bienville stood silent and perplexed, not knowing who Crawford might be, and astounded at his having come recently from Pentagoet; he could place Crawford for neither friend nor enemy. And Crawford, knowing that he must prevent any summons to the Canadians, took instant advantage of the boy's perplexity.

"Keep out of it, Bienville," he said rapidly, as he rose to his feet. "I have a message for Iberville which is imperative." Then he looked at the Abnaki chief, and smiled frostily. "Your *manitou* has deserted you," he said, using the word *esprit* which translated the Indian term. "At the name of the Iroquois your *manitou* trembles and is afraid. That is a woman's scalp at your belt, Caniba dog. Look, how your *manitou* causes it to shake and quiver with fright!"

For an instant the fury-red gaze of the chief dropped to the silky scalp at his waist—and in that instant Crawford was upon him. But his moccasins slipped in the soft snow around the fire; the blow failed, and Crawford, unable to regain balance, fell headlong.

Like a snake uncoiling in stroke, the Abnaki leaped.

Crawford twisted on his side in the snow, by a miracle of dexterity evading the knife-blow, but he could not evade the crushing weight of the redskin, which pinned him down. He drove up blindly and desperately with his own knife. The blade slid home in flesh, then the haft was jerked from his hand as the Abnaki writhed up, only slightly hurt.

For an instant Crawford, helpless to move, knew himself lost. The chief was kneeling upon him, knife flashing up for the finishing stroke; with a grunt, the redskin brought it down for Crawford's breast.

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The blow went true—but the point swerved, turned sharply aside, glanced from Crawford's ribs into the ground.

The Star of Dreams had intervened.

"My *manitou* is strong," panted Crawford, and threw out his strength.

Astonished and dismayed by the happening, disconcerted by those words, the Abnaki was caught in relaxation. He swung sidewise, then Crawford had him by knife-arm and throat and dragged him down in deadly embrace.

Through the snow they plunged, bodies interlocked in a desperate grip, rolling over and over, while to one side watched the eager-faced Bienville, lowered pistol forgotten. Crawford knew himself the better man at this game, feeling the throat-tendons of the redskin yield to his iron fingers; but at the same time he felt the chief's left hand leave his arm and go down for the tomahawk at girdle. Then, the heat of the fire close at hand, he hurled himself sidelong, dragged the Indian over him, thrust that hideously painted head and torso into the flames and embers of the blaze.

War-chief or not, a low cry of mortal anguish escaped the Abnaki, and his arms flew out. Crawford, rising to his knees, drove a fist into the painted visage, then struck once more, this time more carefully. The Abnaki relaxed, senseless, and Crawford dragged his inert body back from the fire.

"A stout rascal, egad!" he exclaimed, panting for breath. "I should put the steel into him—but, unhappily, I have convictions against murder, and I cannot conceive of any immediate use to which I might put his scalp-lock. You may have his life, Bienville; I imagine that it is of some value to you and your brother. By the way, the priming has fallen out of that pistol. Better look to it."

Bienville, wide-eyed at the scene, glanced at his pistol, laughed, and thrust it into his girdle. He stared at Crawford in mingled admiration and perplexity.

"You are an Englishman, yet no enemy? You have come from Saint-Castin? What did you say about a message?"

Crawford chuckled.

"Aye, for Iberville. Your pardon, *monsieur*, one moment——"

As he stood, he had discerned a figure hovering outside the firelight, and knew it for that of Phelim Burke. He beckoned, his mind racing furiously as he stood there; could he handle Bienville aright, everything was won—otherwise all was lost.

"Come along, Phelim, and put up the knife," he said, laughing. "Sieur de Bienville, I think you have seen Sir Phelim Burke before, since your force freed him from bondage."

Phelim limped forward.

"Shall I dirk the lad?" he asked in Irish, though anxiously.

"No," said Crawford, while Bienville, divided between startled alarm and perplexity, stared again. "Go and bring up my men, quickly! They must be close by. Bring them quietly."

Sir Phelim, ready to use his knife if need were, yet relieved that it was not demanded, went limping off into the darkness. Bienville suddenly turned on Crawford with a curt demand.

"Who in the name of the saints are you, *monsieur?* An Irishman, by your words with that poor fellow. If you have a message for my brother, why have you not delivered it to him instead of sitting here on the hillside?"

"All in good time," and Crawford, with a whimsical laugh, waved his hand. "Will you accept a seat at my fire? I want to finish my smoke, and must keep an eye on this red rascal lest he come awake and knife me unexpectedly."

"I have not thanked you for your mercy to him," said Bienville, reluctantly seating himself. "It was well done, *monsieur*. I should have been sorry to pistol you had you slain him, for he is a great man among the Abnakis. By what miracle did you escape his knife? I saw the blow fall full——"

Crawford filled and lighted his pipe with a brand, then put a hand to his shirt and through the gaping rent showed the glittering Star of Dreams, now marked with a dent in the soft virgin gold, and Bienville exclaimed at the smear of blood.

"It's nothing—a scrape of the skin," said Crawford lightly. He was fighting for time now, knowing well that he had a young lion to deal with if he made one false move. "It was a stroke of ill-luck that made your Abnaki recognize that pipe. I helped myself from Saint-Castin's mantel rack, never dreaming that one pipe was more than another."

Bienville laughed boyishly.

"I should have liked to hear Saint-Castin

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curse when he discovered which one you had taken! Then you have come by way of Placentia, eh? Heard you anything of the fleet from France? My brother Serigny was to bring a fleet which the king promised to give Pierre——"

Crawford remembered the French sail of the line they had raised off the Banks.

"The ships are at Placentia now," he said, "though my message does not deal with them. But your pardon, *monsieur*. My name is Crawford, and I was formerly an officer of his Majesty of St. Germains. At present I am following my star of destiny. The Irish gentleman whom you just now beheld is an old friend——"

At this instant the Abnaki chief uttered a low groan and moved slightly. Crawford moved swiftly, picked up some of the rags that the Irish had discarded, and with these he knelt above the chief, binding the latter firmly and gagging him to boot. A crunch of snow caused him to look up—and he saw a tall figure come into the circle of light.

"Ten thousand ——!" exclaimed a rich, vibrant voice. "What's this, Bienville? You and the chief flitting off after dark—who is this man?"

Crawford rose, and his heart sank. What a scurvy trick of fate, when all was in his hands so neatly! For, though the newcomer was garbed as any other woods-loper, Crawford did not need to be told that he was facing Pierre le Moyne, Sieur d'Iberville.

VII

"THIS, my brother," said Bienville hastily, "is the Sieur Crawford. He has come from Pentagoet with a message from Saint-Castin. The warchief quarreled with him, and he bested the chief in fair fight and spared his life."

Crawford scarce listened, for he was staring at Iberville yet seeking past the latter with every sense acutely strained. Incredible as it seemed, there was no one else; Iberville had come alone, perhaps to discover what Bienville and the Abnaki were doing at this hillside blaze. For Iberville, having lost more than one brother at his very side in border raids, cherished most tenderly this youngest scion of the le Moyne stock.

Energy radiated from the man who stood surveying Crawford. Those masterful eyes, so wide-set in his head, those delicate lines of brow and nostril and lip, that great jutting beak of a nose, long upper lip, heavy oval jaw—all of these spelled the man within, impatient of restraint, reckless of obstacles, daring heaven or hell on a cast of the dice. No half-way man was Iberville, and showed it.

"And the fleet's at Placentia!" broke out Bienville suddenly. "Serigny has come!"

Now Iberville started, and a sudden flash gleamed in his eyes.

"Ha! You have letters for me? Orders? Word from Placentia?"

"No," said Crawford. "I chanced to see the fleet on my way here, that is all. I did not stop at Placentia, for reasons which were excellent at the time——"

But Iberville had lifted his head, his eyes darting to the trees around. Least of all men to be caught napping was this veteran of many a warpath, from Hudson Bay to Albany. His hand snatched at the tomahawk in his girdle.

"Men around us!" he snapped. "Back, Bienville——"

"My men," said Crawford, and drew a great breath of relief. Then he laughed lightly. "And if they are not half-dead with snowshoe sickness, sink me!"

He lifted his voice.

"Ho, there! Sir Phelim? Bose? Come along to the fire and have a care what you do."

"Aye," rejoined the heavy tones of Bose, from among the nearer trees. "But these snowshoes be killin' the rogues—groan all ye want now, ye dogs!"

The sound of muffled curses and groans that followed his words brought a laugh to Crawford's lips, and even Iberville's wide mouth twitched in a grim smile. Crawford now played his luck hard; by some miracle the game was all in his hands for the winning, and it was time for the final cast of dice which must win or lose. And, as he perceived in a flash, he must stake all on such a cast as would be thrown only by a fool, a madman—or a gentleman. Abandon Sir Phelim's Irishry* he could not, yet they would not arrive until past midnight at earliest. He must dare Iberville, man to man, soul to soul, and his one desperate hope of success was to evoke from the man's spirit its qualities of reckless abandon and high nobility—and trust to them.

*This term is among those used by Irish writers of the period.

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Knocking out his pipe and pouching it, Crawford stepped around the fire to Iberville, and spoke in a low voice.

"I have a message for your ears alone. Above all, it must not reach Bienville. Will you step aside with me, so that we may speak in private?"

Iberville flashed a glance at the boy, another glance at the surrounding trees. From these, the hulking figure of Bose was appearing. Crawford turned with a curt order.

"Keep your men around the fire. Make no noise. Leave me to speak in peace with this gentleman."

"Aye," said Bose, and stooped to get free of his snowshoes.

"I am at your service, *monsieur*," said Iberville quietly. "Come a few paces down the hillside."

There was a peculiar timbre in his voice. By some instinctive leap of the mind, Crawford knew instantly that Iberville had comprehended everything.

"Careful!" he said. "Hear me out first, for the sake of the boy."

Iberville flashed him an astonished glance. They halted, a dozen paces from the fire, around which the men were now gathering.

"Eh? For the love of the saints, do you read a man's mind?"

"Desperation, my dear Iberville, breeds miracles, as you should know." Crawford spoke lightly, swiftly, for desperation was indeed driving him. "It is true that I have just come from Pentagoet, where I had the pleasure of looting the establishment of Baron de Saint-Castin. Bienville was a trifle hasty in jumping at conclusions, for the message that I bring you is from—myself. I am, by force of necessity, compelled to act the part of a pirate. Those men of mine, and others awaiting me on the coast, are destitute. Now, in this harbor below us there is an excellent ship, heavily laden with all things; and I'm going to have that ship. I think it is in your mind to tomahawk me, rescue your brother from a situation which might prove embarrassing to him, and summon your Canadians. But, I beg of you, postpone this action until you hear me out. To tell the truth, I've had a —— of a wrestling match with your Abnaki chief, and I'm still a trifle short of breath."

Iberville burst into a laugh, compounded of anger and amusement.

"My faith, *monsieur!* I believe that you're a madman."

"I might agree with you," said Crawford whimsically, "and that would prove me sane! As it happens, Iberville, I have no quarrel with you or with Frenchmen. Indeed, several of my men yonder are from French Hispaniola. Nor have I any intention of pirating French commerce. The plain facts of the case are that you got ahead of me by a few hours, in capturing yonder bark, and now I must insist that you hand her over to me."

"I am not in the habit of yielding up what I have seized," said Iberville coldly.

"Precisely. Therefore, I would point out to you that the situation offers a most interesting opportunity of giving a *quid pro quo*. First consider, my dear Iberville, that habits are things which none of us like to break, but which all of us must sometime break unless they are to master us."

Iberville chuckled at that, and Crawford continued swiftly.

"Then consider, I pray you: Item, I am not in the habit of murdering prisoners, or of shooting down boys. Item, those buccaneers who obey me are in the habit of doing both things. You perceive the obvious exchange? If you break your habit of keeping what you have seized, those pirates of mine will then break their habit of murdering; that is to say, if you turn over the bark to me, the Abnaki chief and Bienville go free. But if you refuse to break this habit of yours, then I am unhappily compelled to break my own habit—in effect, to kill the Abnaki and also your brother. The chief's blood would not trouble my conscience in the least, while I know that you would go to great lengths to avoid his death, as a matter of policy toward your Indian allies; yet I confess that I would kill Bienville with the greatest of reluctance."

"Why, you —— philosopher-pirate, you couldn't touch him!" exclaimed Iberville, laughing amusedly. "—— take you, come and join me! I like you, Monsieur Crawford. You shall have a royal commission under me, and I'll grant amnesty to your pirates and free transporation to Boston or where they will. Eh?"

The offer was sincere and cordial, and Crawford regretfully shook his head.

"My dear Iberville, I have sworn to give no more allegiance to kings. I am going into the wilderness to seek freedom—north or west,

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as may be. The old ways of life are as an empty sheath, from which I have drawn the sword; and I go forward with the naked blade. I serve myself, I acknowledge no master, I seek no man's gold—but there! You'll be calling me a madman again."

"A madman? No." Iberville swept him with a keen glance, as they stood under the starlight. "My faith, man! Sometimes I myself am tempted—but never mind. *Vive le roi!* You've tasted freedom and I can't blame you, though I'm sorry you'll not accept my offer. Come! What is your exact proposal?"

"It seems fairly obvious," said Crawford coolly. "I'm as good a man as you with knife or tomahawk, so you'd not down me and get away with any ease. Bienville is surrounded yonder, and the Abnaki is bound. I know that you'd not favor me to save your own life, but you'll do it to save the two yonder. The bark is not worth so much to Canada as are those two lives."

"At a call from me," said Iberville reflectively, "my Canadians would put you all to the stake. And my Indians would very probably put some of you into the kettle."

"Undoubtedly, but you would be in no position to enjoy the spectacle, I assure you!"

"True. Yet I am rather warm in the notion of taking that bark and her cargo into Placentia."

"And, my dear Iberville, I am most——ish warm in the necessity of having her myself. Egad, man! Do you want me to go down to Carbonear Island and head these English against you? They have no officers, no leaders, and are helpless, but if I undertake to lead them, I'll guarantee to cut you off from Placentia——"

Iberville broke into a laugh and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Monsieur Crawford, —— take me if you're not a man after my own heart! You shall have the bark. My word upon it. Call your men and I'll give you boats to get aboard."

"I can't do it, Iberville. I've promised to wait here until after midnight for some of the escaped Irish slaves who are coming to join me."

"What?" exclaimed Iberville. "Faith, you can't expect to keep the three of us prisoners here until after midnight, without my *voyageurs* hacking at the hinges of —— to find us! Unless, of course, you propose to use us as hostages——"

"Not in the least," said Crawford quickly. "It will give me great pleasure if you'll take that Abnaki —— with you and keep him quiet until we get off. Bienville, of course, will know nothing of the entire matter; it remains between the two of us alone. If you will see to it that your men are off the bark, and that your Canadians do not interfere with us, we shall come down to the beach as soon as my Irish arrive, go aboard, and sail away. As you will perceive, it is all very simple."

Iberville stared at him for a moment.

"—— fly away with me! Are you in earnest?"

"Eh? Why, of course! Do you find the proposal disagreeable?"

A short laugh broke from the Canadian.

"What assurance have you that I'll not lay an ambush at the shore and cut you off to the last man?"

"Every assurance in the world."

"What, then?"

"The fact that you are Iberville."

The other was silent a moment, then spoke softly.

"Monsieur Crawford, I offer you my most respectful homage. Shall we rejoin my brother?"

They turned back together to the fire. There Bienville was laughing heartily and exchanging jests with the buccaneers who, weary and cursing the snowshoes that had left them almost unable to hobble, were rubbing sore tendons. The Abnaki chief, conscious, was glaring up at Sir Phelim Burke, who was seated grimly beside him.

Crawford strode forward and cut the chief loose, and at a few words in Algonquin from Iberville, he stalked off into the darkness. Crawford checked his men with a gesture.

"Come, Bienville," said the tall Canadian, and swept off his hat. "Monsieur Crawford, I salute you. To our next meeting!"

The two figures disappeared. Sir Phelim stared after them, then lifted wondering eyes to Crawford.

"*Hanam-an-diaoull* Is it a wizard ye are, Harry? What's happened, lad? What's happened, that ye let those three go——"

"Nothing's happened, Phelim, except that the Star of Dreams is shining fair for us," said Crawford.

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Yet he sighed a little as he turned to tell the men of the ship that lay awaiting them, and in his heart there was a wish that some day he might again meet that tall Canadian, for he felt strangely drawn to the man.

Perhaps, for all his boasted quest of freedom, that offer of a commission under Iberville had been a sore temptation.

VIII

IN THE meanwhile, during three days the men left aboard the *Irondelle* slaved, as Vanderberg put it, like dogs of Holland, yet never was slavery more richly rewarded.

Frontin's hawk-nose led them aright, but not his calculations, for so toilsome was the road along the shore-ice under the cliffs, that in the end Vanderberg rigged shears up above and rove his unrotted mooring-lines together, and so made an easy descent and a quick road over the snow above the cliffs. This let the *Irondelle* pursue her own fate, and a current threw her ashore when the remaining bower-hawser chafed through, and she lay stranded on a shallow.

Who cared? They were mad, those men, doing the work of giants for the reward of the earth-gnomes. On the ledge under the cliff, the ledge which was flooded at high tide, or had been, were great masses of snow-clear ice like crystal, and under the ice lay the shattered and sundered galleon, and chests plain to be seen. Then there was chopping and splitting of ice, and Frontin dried out the wet powder and tampered with it, and made some of it to burn so that the ice was riven asunder.

Because the days were short, they hurled dead trees and logs over the cliff-edge, and built them fires on the ledge, laboring through the night. When wearied, they dropped and slept, and rose and took up ax and chisel again, now snatching a bite to eat and now a dram of hot rum, staggering as they hewed; and the smoke of the burning rose up by day and the flame seared the cliff-side by night. In three days those six men accomplished what any other twelve men would have done in a fortnight, so that in the end they reached the shattered galleon.

On the fourth day came to pass the prodigious finale. The plunder was got at and laid out—six chests of mahogany bound with sea-greened brass, three baggy canvas sacks bulging with gold cups and like articles, and two casks of good Spanish wine. Frontin and the four men were swung up to the cliff-top to haul, while Vanderberg remained below to make each chest fast in turn. A hard driving rain had been falling all night, and Vanderberg had laid fire to the high carven stern-portion of the galleon's wreck, so that presently the ledge and the niche in the cliffs were roaring warm, and the work went on merrily. One by one the chests swung up, and the bags, and one of the casks of wine. Then, as Vanderberg was making fast the second cask, the fire reached some unsuspected powder in the wreck.

Those up above knew not what had happened, nor cared greatly, for the rain was driving down and they had broached the cask of wine and were hammering at one of the mahogany chests for a sight of the gold. Then, when the shock of the explosion was gone, and the roaring echoes had died out, they heard Vanderberg bawling at them and saw the rope shaking; so Frontin flailed them to the lines, and presently the captain was hauled up and landed like a sack of meal.

All fell to laughing at him, for he was spitting oaths and curses like any cat; the clothes were stripped from him, half the great beard was flamed away, and a brand had smitten him across the face, blackening him and bringing the claret from his nostrils in a stream.

"The day of miracles isn't passed yet," cackled Frontin. "Faith, we left you a Dutchman and up you come a black Guinea-man!"

"Give me your breeches, —— you," roared Vanderberg, who was furious.

"Go to the ——," said Frontin, and turned to draw a cup of wine, but Vanderberg struck him from one side and sent him senseless into the snow.

Now Vanderberg stripped one of the men, donned the wet clothes, and sent the fellow running naked in his boots through the rain and snow for the *Irondelle*. Then, repenting the blow and perhaps a little afraid, he roused Frontin to life and held wine to his lips.

"—— take me, it was a foul blow," said he.

Frontin gulped the wine, staggered up, and felt his jaw. He gave the captain a look from his glittering eyes, then shrugged.

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"It's nothing," he said lightly, while the men gaped, expecting a fight. "Come, to work! We must get these chests and bags to the cove."

So that matter passed over, for the moment, though more than likely it drew certain results in train.

Frontin showed them how to make a *travois* of poles, on which the chests might be dragged by two men. The first was loaded with a chest and sent off, and a second was made and sent off likewise, Frontin and the fourth man dragging it, while Vanderberg followed with one of the bags of small loot pulling from his wide shoulders.

When they neared the cove, the man who had gone to clothe himself now came running, with word that the tide was high and the ketch was floated from the shoal. Sure enough, they sighted the *Irondelle* on an even keel and drifting with the currents toward an inner ledge of rocks, though there was a drift of wind and rain offshore. Now, with the gold safely garnered, wakened thoughts of safety, and there was a wild race down to the cove. Tumbling into the boat, they rowed to the ketch and fell to work; she was a sorry thing enough, but better than naught, and there was no time to lose, the tide being at flood.

While Vanderberg fell to work with the hawser-lines they had brought back, bending them to the larboard bower, Frontin and another man got a butt sawed asunder and slung, while the other three loosed the fore-topsail, eased the buntlines, braced the yard and hauled home the sheets and sent the rotten, mended canvas up to catch the higher drift of wind. Leaving Vanderberg and another to brace up as required, Frontin and the three remaining men tumbled into the boat, took out a coil of the old feeble rope, spanned the boat from stem to stern, and set out the butts. The captain and his one man hauled in, the boat hung athwart, and with the dragging butts counteracted the pull of the current. So the ketch got a start, and the upper breeze caught her topsail, and she drew away from the rocky ledge. In two minutes she was moored again by one hawser and safe enough.

Then, with a pint stoup of raw rum all around, it was back to the shore again and all hands for the gold. By the time the six chests and the bags and what was left of the Spanish wine was got down to the cove, the six of them were reeling and staggering with maudlin weariness, and the afternoon half-gone. To get the gold aboard ship and finish their task, however, remained; and Vanderberg drove them at it. Racked and rain-soaked, weary to death, swigging more rum and cursing the gold and the rain, they made shift to row out the boat again and again, until at last the burden was on deck. Then there was a flicker of life as a chest was hammered open, and gold gleamed in little heavy bars all stamped with the Spanish seal; after this, they dropped below like dead men and lay huddled in any shelter they could find, and slept.

Sometime toward morning Vanderberg wakened with cold; the rain had ceased and frost was come again with a clear sky. He got lanterns lighted and a fire going in the galley, and with the dawn all hands were about, the last of the food was set forth, and the click-clack of the pumps was heard. One of the blackamoors went down for more rum, but he came out of the hold with his face all gray.

"The —— has got us now!" he shouted out. "She's all under water, and a butt started, and the seams opened by the pounding."

"Then let her sink and be ——," said Vanderberg, with a storm of oaths. "We're in three fathoms and can't hurt."

By sunrise, indeed, she was settled on bottom, with the side down; but an hour after this there was a shout from the cook on deck. The others were below, eating like starved men, and poured up to see two craft standing in around the headland for the cove.

"English!" said Frontin coolly. "A bark and a ketch, and either of them could master us——"

Oaths stormed and curses rang, for there was no powder and the guns were useless. Some wanted to flee ashore with the gold, but Vanderberg, his half-beard floating in the wind, cursed them into silence and ordered the guns unstopped and run out.

"Little they know we can't bite!" said he. While they were at this, however, and the two English ships running into the cove, Frontin fell suddenly to laughing and pointed to a man in the bows of the bark, which was the nearer craft.

"There's Bose—ha! Crawford has brought us the ships and men."

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Oaths and sour curses changed to yells of mad delight, which were answered from the two ships; and these ran down and anchored a cable-length away. A boat put off from the ketch, with Crawford in her, and picked up Bose from the bark, when Vanderberg saw all his old men coming in the boat, and other men still aboard the bark, he swore with mad joy that Crawford should have an extra share of the gold, to which the other men joined their vote. But Frontin stood to one side, his glittering eyes hard and cold, and a saturnine smile just touching his thin lips.

Crawford came over the rail, Bose and the men poured aboard, and there was pandemonium for a while, stories bawled forth, chests and gold to be stared at, rum to be swigged. Crawford looked at the loot and turned away with a cool shrug, exchanged a glance with Frontin, and found Vanderberg tugging at his sleeve and squinting at the two craft.

"What men are those? Where did ye find 'em? The ketch is a prize, he said?"

"Aye, a Bostonnais—a fur pirate, blown out of her course by storm. When her cap'n and officers were pistoled, she gave in," said Crawford. "Eleven men left alive aboard her who are glad enough to go pirating under Vanderberg or Crawford. On the bark I have eight Irishmen who care naught for Vanderberg but much for Crawford."

"—— and sink me!" roared Vanderberg delightedly, and smote him between the shoulders. "Come down to the cabin and talk in peace."

They went below and settled about the table, leaving the eager men to smash the mahogany chests with axes. Frontin brought what was left of the Spanish wine, and a rare old drink it was; Crawford made his own tale brief, and listened to Vanderberg's tale, and presently Bose came down to hear, fists full of gold and a wide grin on his face. The other men drifted down by ones and twos, until they were all crowded into the cabin and some with gold bars, others with coin found in one of the chests.

Crawford sipped at the Spanish wine but refused to drink heavily. In his manner was a certain constraint, a cold and imperturbable air of waiting; as he listened to Vanderberg's ranting about roaming the Indies with his squadron and mayhap taking aboard more men and sacking some Spanish town on the main, a smile tugged at his lips and his blue eyes glinted frostily. Presently this mien of his impinged upon Vanderberg's perception, so that the captain turned to him with an oath.

"What's in you, Crawford? Hast no warmth in life? Come, down with the wine and we'll go aboard the bark and take possession."

"Nay," said Crawford. "Our ways part here."

Now Vanderberg stared at him, and Bose and the men stared, and a moment of heavy silence settled upon them all. But Frontin's smile grew more saturnine.

"What d'ye mean?" growled Vanderberg, meeting the icy stab of those blue eyes.

"The bark's new and uncommon stout," said Crawford quietly. "No better ship could be found to batter ice. The ketch is near as large as this craft of yours and an even better sailer. I've put no lack of supplies aboard her; indeed, I took her for your use. Move your guns into her and head south or to the ——. I'll take the bark, with my eight Irish and five of the English who want to fare with me to Hudson Bay——"

Vanderberg's eyes blazed.

"Eh? Take the bark? I say you shall not." And his big fist crashed down on the table, while the men around uttered blasphemous approval.

IX

VANDERBERG bawled at the men for silence, reduced himself to calmness by an effort, and turned to Crawford.

"Hark'ee!" said he, leaning forward over the table and giving look for look. "One thing ye forgot. All of us are sworn to certain articles. Any of us may quit the ship whenever he chooses; but company property's another thing. The bark belongs to all of us."

"Aye!" chimed up a chorus of voices. But Crawford laughed a little.

"Who's sworn? Not I. To perdition with your buccaneering articles! As for the bark being yours—who took her? I did, and I mean to have her. But listen, all of ye! I'll be fair. What's my share of that gold up above?"

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"One third to Frontin as discoverer," said the captain promptly. "The rest in shares. Five to me, two to each officer, one to each man. We voted you an extra share."

"You are generous, and I thank you," said Crawford dryly. "But I'll turn back my three shares and take the bark instead. How's that, lads? Vote on it!"

There was a howl of dissent at this, and Vanderberg grinned nastily. He had viewed that bark with a seaman's eye, as had they all, and had found her better than good. Then a sudden thought struck him.

"Why did ye not run with her when ye had her, Crawford?"

Crawford shrugged lightly.

"Why? What I want I take—I don't steal. Bose, will ye go to the bay with me?"

"Nay, sink me if I will!" cried out the big ruffian swiftly. "To a land of ice where devils play all the Winter, and there's but a week i' the year a ship can pass the straits? Not me!"

Crawford looked at Frontin, but the latter made no sign. So he sent his gaze again to Vanderberg, and what he read in the latter's face told him there was storm ahead.

"Take the ketch, Crawford," said Vanderberg, grasping at this bright thought. "Ye could not work the bark with so few men, anyhow. Take the ketch, and what ye will of the stores. How's that, lads?"

"Aye!" roared up the sudden yell, but Crawford only smiled frostily at them.

"I take the bark," said he quietly.

"Settle it as ye will," said Frontin, laughing, and caught a mug from the table. "I'm up above for a dram."

He worked his way through the crowd, none heeding him, and vanished up the ladder that led to the deck.

"Crawford, be reasonable!" growled Vanderberg, with a ponderous oath. "The bark ye shall not have—so say we all."

"She has three guns trained on you," said Crawford coolly. "Perhaps you noticed how she was moored? She'll blow you all to —— and the gold with you, if I come not back."

Now, at any other time this threat would have won the day, for none doubted that it would be carried out. As it happened, however, the men who had returned with Bose were drunk with exultation and hot raw rum and the touch of gold; and those with Vanderberg were worn to the quick with mad drinking and madder work, so that at a dare they would all of them have attacked the devil and his angels.

Too late, Crawford saw that his main petard had failed to explode. Ugly grins ran along the circle of black and bronzed and bearded faces, and an uglier murmur; hands went fumbling to knives, and men drew closer together before the companion-way. Vanderberg showed his great yellow teeth in a grin of sneering anger.

"Ye think that bullies of the main are adread of a shotted gun or two? Ye poor simpleton!"

A wild outburst of laughter went up at this, and devilry was in the laughter. For a moment rang out scurrilous jests and oathy jibes; but as Crawford sat unmoving and quite cool, and as his frosty blue eyes swept them from man to man with a calm unconcern, they presently quieted. Not that they were abashed, however.

"Traitor!" spat a negro, and others caught up the word.

Now they were dangerous, for steel was out; they were persuaded against him in their hearts, and murder came close to the surface. Nor could it be avoided. Massed against him, Vanderberg with them, they had no fear of him now. They were on three sides of him, Bose and the captain at the table, his back to the wall of the cabin. There was a large stern window, but the glass had been smashed and a cloth nailed over it.

Now an irresolute silence. Vanderberg put out a hand and gulped down what was left of the Spanish wine; it mixed ill with rum, for his cheeks fired red at once. Then he cocked his head, listening. In the silence came a squeaking from above, as of a block and tackle at work; but this was instantly forgotten, when Crawford played his last and most desperate card.

He drew two pistols from under his coat and laid them on the table, and calmly primed them with a pinch of powder.

"Gentlemen," he said coolly, "we fail to agree. The one determining factor must be hot lead, if ye'll have it so. So far as my share of the gold is concerned, I'll give it to the fellows aboard the ketch who want to join you, but the bark is mine. I'm going back to her. Any of you lads want to ship with me?"

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"We'd ship wi' the foul fiend sooner," muttered one of them.

Crawford laughed.

"You'll do that if ye try to stop me, lads. Careful, cap'n! Here are two pistols, and ye have none. I'll——"

"Your high hand has gripped too far this time!" bawled Vanderberg, and shoved back his chair. "Stop him, lads! Give him the steel."

Even before the word was spoken, the surging movement of men began, and Crawford knew there was no more hope. Therefore, he acted.

With one movement he lifted the heavy table with his knees, threw his shoulder against it, and hurled it back upon Vanderberg and the men. One of them plunged at him with knife ready, and Crawford's pistol roared in his very face. Over his body, Crawford leaped for the ladder, and shot down with his second pistol a negro in his way. Then he was upon the ladder.

The hand of the dying negro clamped upon his ankle.

A long howl, as of ravening beasts, filled the cabin; the men hurled forward, knives out, fighting each other to get at the tripped figure. The empty pistols smashed in their faces, but they gripped him, they had him down, they dragged him back from the ladder and seethed above him in a wild tangle of fighting shapes. In that confined space the reek of powder went to their lungs and brains. They were no longer men, but blood-scenting beasts, each of them striving only to sink his knife into the man who had dared them. The powder-smoke rolled up to the ceiling and back down upon them, blinding everything, creating an obscurity that was hideous with yells and the spreading stink of raw blood. Man slashed man indiscriminately. The roaring bellow of Vanderberg was drowned in yells and maddened oaths.

In one corner the twisting mass of men disintegrated. Crawford, writhing from the heart of the blind fury, came to one knee, knife and tomahawk in hand. A Frenchman screamed out horribly. Coming to his feet, Crawford dimly beheld the hulking figure of Bose rushing at him; he slipped aside, struck out with the deadly tomahawk, felt the blade sink in between ear and shoulder. Neck half severed, dead in his stride, Bose pitched forward headlong at the cloth covering the window, burst it away, lingered limply for an instant over the sill, and then lurched through the smashed frame and was gone. The morning sunlight streamed in across the reek of powder.

Crawford plunged for the window, seeing there his one chance of getting clear. He was at it, had a hand at the opening, when a man swung into him full force, hurled him aside, drove at him with a knife. They went down together, and now the pack was upon him once more with shrill yells as the new flood of light betrayed their prey.

Again Crawford rose, back to window, and cut with knife and ax at the ringing faces. Knives bit back; blood was streaming from him in a dozen places. Then, flailing his way through the midst of them, splitting the serried rank asunder, came Vanderberg, whirling in both hands a leg from the wrecked table. He whirled, and struck. Crawford ducked the blow, the club struck the cabin wall—and the tomahawk left Crawford's hand.

Too slow! Vanderberg interposed the club, and the steel glanced. Again the table-leg swung; as it fell, Crawford darted inside the blow, though the force of it jarred him to his heels, and struck out with his knife. The point raked across Vanderberg's brow, no more, and from one side came a thrown knife that struck Crawford over the temple, but haft first. He threw out his arms, caught at the cabin wall, fell to one knee, crouched.

A wild howl roared up, and the men surged in on him. Then, under their very hands and knives, he sprang. The leap took him upward, sent him head first through the window-opening, banged his hips against the frame—and he was gone. At least he had defied them, escaped them, even if he plunged to his death in the icy water below!

X

WHILE tumult raged down below, Frontin had been hard at work on deck. He got his dram of rum, then he clapped on the companion-hatch and stoppered it. Moving with incredible agility, he went to the smashed mahogany chests, filled two of them with the scattered gold bars, whipped slings around them, and drew in the block and tackle, still reeved, which had brought them aboard.

One by one he lowered them into the

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boat lying alongside. From the men crowded at the rail of bark and ketch, who had heard the two pistol-shots, were coming angry shouts and queries, but Frontin only waved his hand at them and followed the chests down into the boat. This was a perilous matter, since now she rode heavily, but he put an oar from the stern and began to scull. He went, not toward the other craft nor the shore, but along the side of the *Irondelle* to the stern, where he waited.

He was still waiting there, a twisted grin upon his thin lips, anxiety in his glittering eyes, when Crawford dropped all asprawl into the water. An instant later Frontin was bending above the spot, while heads crowded through the stern window above and yells roared at him. He grinned, waved his hand. They watched, wondering at his purpose there.

The wonder was soon flamed into wild rage when they saw him pull the dripping figure of Crawford in over the stern. Weak, half-conscious, yet wakened anew by his icy immersion, Crawford came over the gunnel and managed to drag himself to the thwart, as Frontin bent to the oar. The yells of fury from above died away, for the boat shot back around the side of the ketch.

"You came by the wrong road," said Crawford, gasping. "Why the —— didn't you get 'em in the rear? Sink me, man, I'd given up hope of help from you."

Frontin fastened upon him a saturnine regard. Crawford was looking up at the ship.

"I'm not a fool," he said, "and I had no pistols. No need to look up! The hatch is clapped on. I had to get this gold of mine."

Crawford glanced around at the chests, and broke into a laugh. From the *Irondelle* came a hammering and pounding, a wild roar of muffled voices.

"Now's your chance," said Frontin coolly. "Say the word and I'll slip aboard her, or call your men from the bark. Touch fire to her, take the gold, and leave the dogs to roast. Eh?"

"Plague take the gold, and them with it, you ruffian!" said Crawford. He could feel the strength ebbing out of him rapidly. "What brought you to aid me?"

Frontin squinted at the bark, and made a slight gesture.

"The Star of Dreams," said he, and laughed thinly. "But tell me swiftly what you want me to do. I don't think you're hurt to death, yet in another minute the blood will be drained out of you——"

"Some of the English aboard the ketch will join me. Get them. Set a course for the north. Tell Phelim not to fire the guns——"

"And yonder ketch?"

"Leave her here—for Vanderberg." Crawford uttered a wild, swift laugh. "'Twas he and you gave the Star into my hands. Then I was a homeless, destitute wanderer, an escaped felon; now I've a stout ship, a heavy lading, true friends to aid, and the Star of Dreams to lead into the north—into the north, over the horizon—always over the horizon! Aye, after all——"

"After all?" prompted Frontin, as the words failed weakly.

"After all, Vanderberg made only one mistake—he—he opposed the—destiny of—the Star of—Dreams——"

Crawford's head drooped, and he pitched forward off the thwart, senseless. But Frontin, rapidly working the oar, glanced down at the reddening body with a thin smile.

"Nay, nay!" he murmured. "That talk will do for fools, but not for me. Where poor Vanderberg made his mistake, was in opposing the destiny of Harry Crawford! *En avant*—the Star goes north, and I follow it. Immortality awaits us; whether we gain immortality by pike-thrust, bullet, or frost, what matter?"

He shrugged a little, then dropped his oar and deftly caught the line flung to him by Sir Phelim Burke of Murtha.

Ten minutes afterward, the bark was standing out of the cove toward the ice-blink on the north horizon.

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Our Camp-Fire came into being May 5, 1912, with our June issue, and since then its fire has never died down. Many have gathered about it and they are of all classes and degrees, high and low, rich and poor, adventurers and stay-at-homes, and from all parts of the earth. Some whose voices we used to know have taken the Long Trail and are heard no more, but they are still memories among us, and new voices are heard, and welcomed.

We are drawn together by a common liking for the strong, clean things of out-of-doors, for word from the earth's far places, for man in action instead of caged by circumstance. The *spirit* of adventure lives in all men; the rest is chance.

But something besides a common interest holds us together. Somehow a real comradeship has grown up among us. Men can not thus meet and talk together without growing into friendlier relations; many a time does one of us come to the rest for facts and guidance; many a close personal friendship has our Camp-Fire built up between two men who had never met; often has it proved an open sesame between strangers in a far land.

Perhaps our Camp-Fire is even a little more. Perhaps it is a bit of leaven working gently among those of different station toward the fuller and more human understanding and sympathy that will some day bring to man the real democracy and brotherhood he seeks. Few indeed are the agencies that bring together on a friendly footing so many and such great extremes as here. And we are numbered by the hundred thousand now.

If you are come to our Camp-Fire for the first time and find you like the things we like, join us and find yourself very welcome. There is no obligation except ordinary manliness, no forms or ceremonies, no dues, no officers, no anything except men and women gathered for interest and friendliness. Your desire to join makes you a member.

WHILE it is his second, not his first, story in our magazine Major Stephen M. Walmsley follows Camp-Fire custom by rising to introduce himself:

Office of the Chief Signal Officer,
Washington, D. C.

Thanks for the proffered seat by the "Camp-Fire." I accept it with pleasure, even though it be on the smoky side which is properly reserved for "rookies." Ordinary camp-fires are no novelty, but yours is extraordinary.

My own life I can best describe by saying that it's been fun and I only wish my stories might be as interesting to your readers as my experiences have been to me.

I WAS born in Wisconsin and acquired my love for the out-of-doors in the woods and on the lakes and streams of that delightful State. I attended the University of Wisconsin for two years and then went to work in the lead and zinc mines. In my two years there I held almost every job from mucker to mine superintendent.

Then I got a chance to go to West Point and have been in the army ever since. I stayed at the Military Academy four years, played on the football team, and graduated in 1912. Then my wanderings began. I served with the famous "Galloping Seventh" Cavalry in the Philippines, and, either on duty or for pleasure, wandered over much of that archipelago and some of the mainland of Asia and in Japan. I followed General Pershing's trail into Mexico after Villa and to France after the Hun.

I HAVE ridden the banks of the Rio Grande with Texas Rangers, River Guards and cattlemen. I have hiked with the Philippine Constabulary and with native hunters through the cogon grass and along the mountain trails of Luzon. I have followed timber-cruisers through the woods of Michigan and Wisconsin. I have run a drill and "pounded steel" with hardrock men. I have flown, as a passenger, with the Royal Flying Corps in northern France.

I have watched the soldiers of many nations at

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work and at play—Tommies, Aussies, Canadians, Diggers, Poilus, Senegalese, Moroccans, Belgians, Portuguese, Italians, Russians and Japs. I have seen something of our Navy and the British. I was aboard the *Mount Vernon* when she was torpedoed.

I have squinted at the scenery from the passes of the Canadian Rockies, from the Pali outside Honolulu, from the "Peak" at Hong Kong, from the top of Santo Tomas in the Baguio Mountains, from the crest of the Talisay Ridge and the slopes above Kariuzawa.

I have watched the Southern Cross climb upward from the horizon, the emerald and turquoise waters playing across the reefs of Guam harbor and the Mohammedans at their prayers, kneeling Mecca-ward on the old Chinese Pier in Jolo.

I have hunted and fished in many of the places I have visited and, most fun of all, I have talked to the people, learned something of what they thought and how they lived.

I am a member of the Phi Delta Theta fraternity and an associate member of the American Institute of Radio Engineers.

Now, throw some fresh wood on the fire and call on the next man.—STEPHEN M. WALMSLEY.

THE scalping question again. And what aviator comrade can tell us about the outside loop? Thompson Burtis, who this year resigned from the Air Service, has been in Mexico, so he may not see this question from another ex-aviator, but there are plenty more birdmen among us.

Chester, South Carolina.

I have seen discussed in Camp-Fire—some few times—the question as to whether a person scalped by the Indians ever survived. Only remember very few instances cited where this was the case; however I happen to have a little bit of information along that line, and you can pass it along if you wish. My grandfather told me of a great-great (and maybe further back than that) grandmother of mine, named Margaret Kinney (or maybe it was Margaret McKinney; I am not certain as to the names as that name has passed out of this section and it has been a good many years since she told me). Anyway this great-great-grandmother was scalped by the Indians some hundred or so years ago, in Chester County, S. C., at a big rock about 15 miles from Chester, and left for dead, but afterward recovered. I was not told whether the entire scalp was removed or not; but the expression was that she was "scalped by the Indians and left for dead." She lay unconscious for some hours and finally, after the Indians had gone, managed to crawl to her home.

Some years back I ran across an old book, "South Carolina Women in the Revolution," or something like that—don't remember the exact title but it was a pretty old book—and this book gave the details of this same incident and went further to say that the victim of the scalping gave birth to a daughter some time after the accident (some few months) and the child was marked on one cheek with the figure of an Indian tomahawk. My great-great-grandmother must have lived several years after, the scalping, for the point made to me when I was told of it was that she was left for dead, but fully recovered.

At any rate it seems to be a fact that this was one instance when a person was scalped and afterward survived. I am fairly sure several of the older people in Chester County had heard of this, as have asked a few and they all seemed to know of it. I suppose the occurrence must have been very, very unusual—since it has been handed down that far.

ONE other question: Thompson Burtis' aviation stories are unusually accurate and I think he might have this information—the question of an "outside" loop in a plane. I flew two-seater planes some during the war, in this country, and some in France after the armistice, and at the different fields the question was discussed whether such was possible. The planes used at these fields were Curtiss JN4 A-D, Canuck, and JN4 H and D. H. 4's. None of the pilots thought it could be done. Selfridge Field (Mt. Clemens, Mich.), was a free stunting field with the JN4 H Curtiss—we managed to loop, barrel roll after a fashion and do most of the usual stunts, but no one ever tried the outside loop. I have kind of lost track of aviation development since I got out of the Army, and it may be possible to do such with a rotary motored single-seated plane. What brought the question up this time is that some time ago I read a story in *another* magazine, where a U. S. Mail Plane was held up (on the ground, of course) by a desperado who forced the pilot to take the desperado up with him, and the pilot had made up his mind to get rid of said desperado by doing an outside loop in a D. H. 4 Mail Plane—when a cyclone hit that particular section and wrecked the plane—threw the desperado out—etc.—or some such happy ending. This story was not in *Adventure*, but the question has worried me as to whether such "can be did" and, if so; how? I can't figure the stunt.—C. R. EDWARDS.

IN CONNECTION with his stories now appearing in our magazine Harold Lamb gives us a survey of the Cossacks:

So much could be written and so little has been written about the early Cossacks that the author of these tales can do no more than sketch the origin and some of the characteristics of one of the most adventurous races of the earth, and leave the tales to speak for themselves.

THE word Cossack is the English version of *Kasák*, which means rover or wanderer. Hence, to the Russian nobility of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a Cossack represented a vagabond or "masterless man." Because under the great Tsars of these two centuries, the Russian feudal system was beginning where Western Europe left off. Human beings were either serfs or masters of serfs. The *boyar*, or noble, owned the souls and bodies of his men. The *mujiks*, or peasants, were bound to the soil, and the merchant class, so powerful in the guilds of French and German towns, hardly existed in the vast prairies and forests of the eastern frontier.

Russia itself was four centuries behind the times. Emerging from the obscurity of Cimmerian darkness, the Russian nobles under Ivan the Terrible and Boris Goudunov were beginning to push South, East and West. In the West they encountered the

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powerful empires of Poland and growing Sweden. To the South, the Turks held the Black Sea, Constantinople and most of what is now the Balkans. Remember that at this time the Grand Signior, the Sultan, was the most powerful monarch in Europe. At his back were the riches, the human beings of North Africa, the Levant, Egypt, the Holy Land, Arabia and the great cities of Mesopotamia and Turkestan. The sun of the great Moghuls—who were of Turkish race—was just rising in India.

THE devastating tide of the Tatar invasion, begun by Genghis Khan and ended by Timur the Lame (Tamerlane) had swept back from the East of Europe, leaving in its wake what the early priest-wanderers described as a wilderness of white bones and ruined towns. The length of this vast frontier from the White Sea, and the polar regions, to the empire of the Turks was unpeopled except by the nomad tribes, the residue of the Tatar tide.

Into this immense land of fertile prairies, primitive forests, and wide rivers the *boyars* of the Tsar were beginning to push a few settlements. They were for the most part trading posts, such as Kazan and Sibir (which gave its name to Siberia.) A wooden palisade, a log church, and a few cannon marked these advanced points from which the Muscovites could trade for the furs of the Tatar tribes, and—down the Volga River—for the silks, spices, weapons, and precious metals of Persia, borne to the Black Sea in caravans.

Thus the frontier in 1600 marked by the Volga can be compared to the frontier of America two hundred years later, the Mississippi.

HOW about the origin of the word "Maverick?" Does it go back as far as Colonial New England?

Albany, New York,
Bureau of Markets and Storage,
Dep't. of Farms and Markets.

I wonder if any of the members around the camp-fire have any first-hand information in regard to a certain "Samuel Maverick" who, according to Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary, was a Texas cattle raiser who refused to brand his cattle and thereby gave origin to the work "maverick" "an unbranded animal, particularly a calf" (to quote the dictionary).

I HAVE some reason to believe that the origin of this term is more ancient than that given above—in fact, it goes back to colonial New England in the middle and later 17th century to another Samuel Maverick who occupied Noddle's Island (now East Boston) from 1629 to 1650. This Samuel came over from England in 1623 with Sir Ferdinando Gorges and, because he was an Episcopalian and also apparently rather an independent soul, got himself into all kinds of hot water with his neighbors, one of their grievances being that he would not brand his cattle and horses as required by Act of the General Court of Massachusetts passed in 1647.

How I happened to be speculating along this line is indicated by the publication "Horse Raising in Colonial New England" of which I am the author and which I am sending you under separate cover. In going over the records and material used in preparing the bulletin I did not find any actual case where the word "maverick" was used to describe an unbranded animal but the possibility that it was so used in common parlance is rather intriguing. Anyhow I'd like to know more about the Texas "Maverick" if any one has the information.—H. D. PHILLIPS.

FOLLOWING our Camp-Fire custom William P. Barron rises and introduces himself to the readers of his story in this issue:

New York City.

I am very happy to take my place in Camp-Fire fellowship. I am a little late coming in, however, as "The Tale of a Rooster" is my second story published in *Adventure*. To introduce myself to Camp-Fire will say, I am Texas born and reared or, as we say down there, "raised."

I spent all of my boyhood there, on Texas creeks, rivers and coast, hunting, fishing and camping out for weeks at a time. Digging in old Indian battlefields and mounds and hunting for pirate treasures (La Fitte's). Many happy and interesting hours I have spent talking to the coastwise seamen, and I learned them and loved them, too.

I can shoot straight, ride straight without the English see-saw affected among the toy horsemen we see in our parks.

I CAN find my way about in a pine forest or on a prairie, I might add, in fact, much better than I found my way about the streets of Boston while stopping there for a few months, about two years ago. I have been about the world a bit, parts of South America, the greater part of Mexico, and in France, as a battalion surgeon during the Great War.

I went to France a partisan patriot; I came back an American whose love for his own country now includes all the United States. I looked about Europe and I came to the conclusion that the glamour of it for us lies in its literature. Practically every foot of Europe has been covered in romance and story, while here at our door lie greater romance, more stirring adventure, greater daring deeds than Europe has ever known. Who knows about them? Only here and there has America been touched upon. Aside from our own magazine, our sex-sodden literature deals with New York's East Side on one hand and an unreal golf-playing West Side on the other. And those who come after us will not know America, "the real America" that lies beyond the Jersey ferries.

When it came to me to obey the impulse to write, I elected for adventure, (real American adventure, if you please) and, because I have been blessed with a keen sense of humor, I decided to specialize in the humorous side of adventure. There is too much of grim tragedy in it.

ANENT my present story, I will say I saw almost its duplicate cock fight at the Fiesta of Guadalupe in Aguas Calientes; with me were two choice adventurous spirits—two American photographers. They got many snap-shots of the fight. I hope if either of them sees this he will write to me in care of *Adventure*. Unless they fell for some black-eyed señorita before they returned to the States and remained to become Mexican citizens.

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The educated cock was the property of a Chinaman who had trained him and the fight occurred about as I have written it.

I have sat in at many a Camp-Fire, but so far have not spoken. The Indians have a saying that "much talk wastes tobacco," perhaps I have wasted enough for this time.

PERHAPS you would be interested to know where I found a copy of *Adventure*. Under an overturned ambulance on the road between Men Le Tur and Mont Rec in France. Four kilometers from Mt. Rec—the morning of the advance on St. Mihiel and the ambulance was a German one. How it got there God knows.—WILLIAM P. BARRON.

LETTERS from you protesting against the anti-weapon movement (whose backers stay back in the shadows and can not be identified)have come in such great numbers that we can't possibly find space for more than a very small proportion of them. Here is a sample—from a lawyer who does not believe that all evils can be removed by legislation.

Remember that *Field and Stream*, 25 West 45th Street, New York City, is conducting an organized campaign against this anti-weapon movement. The best way to make your protest effective is by joining that campaign.

Brooklyn, New York.

In combating any vicious movement it seems to me important first to discover who its backers are, and what their motives are; in this way we are able to pour water on the fire, not on the smoke.

FOR example, there is no doubt that Prohibition, starting apparently from a few sincere but impractical visionaries, received much financial help from foreign distillers, who hoped by eliminating American distilleries to have the American market to themselves even though their products had to be smuggled into the United States. They have been partly successful as every one knows, and today the papers report hundreds of "rum ships" waiting outside the three-mile limit to run in their cargoes. The foreign distiller is thus able to sell his product here at a price three or four times greater than he could have, before prohibition, and he pays no duty, which makes up for his losses in captured liquor. He can easily sell every drop he can land in spite of having to compete with the inferior domestic "moonshine."

Now suppose that in place of liquor we consider pistols, and in place of a foreign distiller we consider a foreign pistol-maker. Is it not possible that the same scheme is being tried? Foreign manufacturers are flooding the American market now with one-hand guns at prices that are far below those of the domestic ones and ranging from Spanish cast iron, but beautifully finished, imitations of Colts and Smith & Wessons to wonderfully accurate but ever-jamming pre-bellum Mausers. If the anti-pistol law pass openly, foreign-made pistols, much easier to smuggle than liquor, would be illicitly sent here and sold here in unheard of numbers and at unheard of prices. Would not Germany, for instance, pay well to Congressmen and Senators who could bring this about? Far fetched? Not at all. The public is quite used to reading charges that this or that Congressman is in the pay of the railroads or some trust. Why couldn't a few of them be in the pay of, let us say, Krupps?

THEREFORE I charge, and as a lawyer I realise the responsibility of what I say, that the backers of the Federal anti-pistol manufacturing and possessing bill are acting—either because they have been misled or because they have been bribed—in the interest of foreign pistol manufacturers.

I challenge any one to answer these objections to the practical effect of the proposed anti-pistol law.

1. How can the U. S. Government prevent the smuggling in of foreign pistols, when it can't stop the smuggling in of liquor, especially when the latter is bulkier, perishable, heavy, and can be smelled?

2. Having in mind the immense sum of money spent in vain every year by our Government in trying to stop rum smuggling, where will it get the greater sum necessary to even partly combat the pistol smuggler?

3. How will it be possible to find and confiscate the millions of pistols now in the country, many already in the possession of the criminals?

4. How can we prevent one pistol from being rented out to one criminal after another as he needs it for a "job" thus arming two or three crooks with one gun?

5. How can the law prevent a criminal from buying a rifle or shotgun, sawing off the barrel, cutting of the stock to the pistol grip and from this making his own "boot-leg" pistol?

6. And if we could do all these, how can we prevent the use, as deadly weapons of knives, small hatchets, hammers, etc.? In this connection it seems to me much fairer to have crook fight good citizen if both have revolvers than to let the crook have a knife and the good citizen nothing but a copy of the anti-pistol law.

Please excuse this long letter, but I really think the subject so important that it runs away with brevity.—MALCOLM ROSS MATHESON.

A FEW words from H. Bedford-Jones in connection with his novelette in this issue:

The background is historically correct, except that Iberville was not with Bienville at the Bay de Verde burning. For details regarding Saint-Castin's extraordinary establishment, see Parkman. The Mohawk war-whoop, which I have not seen elsewhere in this form, is so quoted by Bacqueville de la Potherie; he had it in dictation from Mohawk chiefs at the date of the story. Newfoundland details from the diary of Sieur Baudouin, chaplain with Iberville; not to my knowledge translated, but furnished me in MS by the kindness of the Newfoundland Historical Society. Despite a dictum of the *Literary Digest* that the term "Canadian" is not found previous to the nineteenth century—I think 1803 is the date assigned—I have used it advisedly. Abbé Baudouin employs it constantly, as does la Potherie, with the express purpose of

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differentiating Canadians from French. That it was thus used by the English likewise, is show by an explicit statement of Baudouin. Any of *Adventure's* history-sharks who spot anything that looks amiss will confer a favor by writing me.—H. B-J.

WHO knows about this bunch of English war-veteran colonists in the interior of Peru?

Berkeley, California.

Just remembered an item of interest I saw in the Manchester *Guardian* a year ago; one of those quiet write-ups of stuff that would send an American newspaper man looking up sensational adjectives, but merely strike the Briton as worth mentioning casually. It was about a bunch—a good-sized bunch—of young British veterans of the war, who had got fed up on life at home after the armistice—all of them university men, by the way. So they got hold of some capital somewhere, bought a long-term lease on virgin land somewhere in the interior of Peru, and left to make a new world for themselves. Two things made it interesting to me; first, that they were all both university men and veterans; the last point somewhat counterbalancing the tendency of the inexperienced university man to theoretical speculation; second, that in undertaking such an adventure they were really doing much the same thing the early colonists in this country tackled. Who knows but something big may come of it? A hundred years from now much history may have been made by those energetic young chaps that the war shook out of their satisfaction with the things they knew.—ARTHUR G. BRODEUR.

ON THE occasion of his first story in our magazine William Byron Mowery follows Camp-Fire custom by rising to introduce himself:

Name: William Byron Mowery. (Was something different till Bryan got beat the *third* time.) Age: 23. Height: sawed-off. What I'm doing at present: sprouting ideas of composition in young Longhorns at the University of Texas. What I have been doing: hunting and trapping, training dogs, ordinary seaman, member of the "Treat 'em rough" service, circus musician, reporter, and goodness knows what else—I don't remember. What I'd like to do: shake loose and hot-foot it for the Ungava. What I'm going to do pronto: ditto.

THE following sent in by E. G. H., is from an article by Karl K. Kitchen in the New York *World*. At an earlier Camp-Fire some one denied that wolves ever cross with dogs, but the fact seems too established for question.

As it happens, Talbot Mundy, an old friend of Laurence Trimble's, has been sending me photographs of the latter's experiments with wolf-packs. He wrote me much of how Mr. Trimble handles these wild gentry personally—so much and so amazing that I thought he was stringing me. So he sent the photos and I had to believe.

I understand Mr. Trimble considers the results of a dog-wolf cross too uncertain in raising the standard of sled-dogs, and finds the best results from crosses between malemiutes and police dogs like his Strongheart. His experiments are important as well as interesting, for the war, particularly the Siberian campaign, drained the North of good sled-dogs, and good sled-dogs are essential to the North's development.

It was Laurence Trimble talking "wolf" and "dog" in his suite at the Chatham. And it might be added that there are few men better qualified to talk on these subjects. For in addition to his long experience in the woods, Trimble has directed more pictures with dog stars than any man in the movies, not to mention wolves. His greatest ambition is to make a movie of a real wolf pack roaming at large in the woods, and this Winter he hopes to get at least a strip of such film.

"When the hundreds of hunters and trappers that ordinarily roam the forests, not only killing wolves but depriving them of much of the game upon which they must subsist, are away at war there is a noticeable increase in wolves," Mr. Trimble continued. "It naturally follows that there are today more wolves on the North American Continent as well as in other countries of the world than ever before. I found this condition existing in Canada. Of late year too the appearance of the big Siberian wolf has been noted on this continent, while the lobo or gray wolf of the Western plains is fast disappearing. The Siberian wolf has evidently worked his way East from Siberia across the ice of Bering Sea through Alaska and on down into Canada, being found occasionally in the forests of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan.

"The wolf," continued Mr. Trimble, "is particularly ferocious when with the pack or when he has his prey helpless. He has the reputation of being a coward, but what many deem to be cowardice is merely discretion. In my opinion he is the wisest of all four-footed animals of the wilds and an exceptionally clever thief. His greatest fear is man and he skulks through the forest and attacks the helpless in the dark, but this is only his way of exercising discretion.

"IF A man stands and shows no signs of fright, no pack of wolves, regardless of how hungry they may be, will ever attack him on this continent. Wolves have killed men sleeping in the forest and injured men. And when a man climbs a tree in fright the pack will, of course, surround and circle the tree. There have been cases where men treed by wolves and numbed by the cold have lost their hold and tumbled to the ground only to be devoured. But if an unarmed man should climb down and face the pack he would not be touched.

"The only place in the world where wolves have been known to attack a fighting man on his feet is in the territory known as Finmarken in the northern part of Finland. These Finmarken wolves are the largest in the world and range in color from coal black to pure white. They prey chiefly upon the

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great herds of reindeer that abound in that country and this undoubtedly accounts for their great size, strength and ferocity. I expect to make a trip to Finmarken next Spring to get some specimens of these wolves.

"THE best sled dog in the world," he said, "is of no particular breed, contrary to the impression that they are either just malemiutes or Eskimo dogs that do the heavy work in the Far North. They are all breeds, except the lap-dog type. Of course, the husky or malemiut strain is in all of them, In trading communities where the sled dogs show signs of losing their stamina, the natives very often renew the strain by breeding a dog with a wolf. The female sled dog is chained out where wolves are known to be running in the mating season and the man who chains her out perches with rifle in the branches of a tree at a convenient distance from her. In due time the leader of the pack appears and immediately after the mating the man in the tree drills a bullet through the wolf. If he failed to shoot, that wolf and the other members of the pack would fall on the dog and tear her to pieces."

SOMETHING from T. S. Stribling about his story "Fombombo" which should have appeared with the first installment of that serial. You'll be interested in knowing that the story is to be published in this country by the Century Company and by an English firm on the other side.

I met the original of the American salesman in my novel one Summer as I sailed from Port au Spain, Trinidad, up the Orinoco River to Ciudad Bolivar. He was the confidential type and before we were out of the harbor of Port au Spain he had given me an outline of his love affairs which he filled in as we proceeded up the Orinoco. At Ciudad Bolivar we roomed together, in fact used the same bed and I think were bitten by the same mosquitoes; so if I drew his psychology with great exactitude, it is very probably because the same blood flows equally in the veins of me, him, and the Orinoco mosquitoes.

AT BOLIVAR, too, I met the counterpart of the Coronel in my novel. Only there were two Coronels at my hotel. One was a fat smiling fellow and the other was a powerful, tigerish looking man, so I chose him for my story. Some of my friends told me the way a man got to be Coronel in the Venezuelan army was by killing off some of the President's political enemies. The friend who told me this was a Gautemalan missionary who was about to tramp across the llanoes from Bolivar to Callao with a pack of Bibles. I am sorry I couldn't have put this missionary in my book. He was broke there at the hotel, and he told the landlady just to be patient with him—that he was praying to God to send him enough money to pay his board. Now this may sound to you like a skin game, but if you had seen my Gautemalan, you would have known he was sincere. I could see him in his room, most any old time, down on his knees by his bed asking God to pay his board bill. This sounds funny, but it wasn't funny at all. Somehow he made a tragedy of it.

I got to liking the missionary very much and we took little walks out on the llanoes together. The English consul at Bolivar, my friend the American salesman, my landlady, a cockney and a very good-natured soul, all advised me to stay off the llanoes, but the charm of my missionary and the little Spanish sermons he preached at the mud huts of the peons were so apostolic, I went anyway. Then one morning I woke up with a violent fever. It was what they called "sun fever" and I burned up with it for two weeks. My Gautemalan waited on me hand and foot. He spoke no English and my poor Spanish *vanished* absolutely during my fever. However he got me up and wabbling about in two weeks and then he said he knew why God had delayed sending him money for his board—so he could take care of me during my illness. And just a day or two later he really did receive a cablegram order for enough money to settle his bill. In the meantime my American drummer had vanished.

WELL, I had enough of the Orinoco so I took a steamer back to Port au Spain and from there I caught a French liner to La Guayra. The harbor of Port au Spain is very shallow and a waterman had to row me about two miles out to the French boat. When I was about fifty yards distant I heard a tremendous voice on the ship roaring, "Behold Stribling! All hail Stribling, the novelista!" It was the first time I had ever been paged on the open seas.

Naturally it was my American friend whom I had stumbled over again. He had been up to Martinique and was en route for Caracas. We traveled to La Guayra together and then took taxis over the mountains to Caracas. He asked me where I meant to stop in Caracas. I told him the Pension Washington. He scouted the idea; he said he meant to board at the Palace, a hotel which charged from ten to twenty dollars a day. I pause here to say that this is the regulation American idea of travel in South America, that it costs from ten to twenty dollars a day for living expenses. In my correspondence with various travel companies before I left the United States, that was the rate all of them quoted. Now of course that's silly. South American hotels are like all other hotels; one can find very comfortable quarters at comfortable prices, I mean anywhere from $1.75 to $2.50 per day.

BUT to get back to my drummer. We separated. I went to my pension and he went to the Palace. About two days after that I came down to breakfast one morning and heard some one shouting my name from an adjoining table. He was telling the assembled guests that "Stribling wouldn't do," "He was a man that would bear watching," and so on in the same jocular defamation at great length. I looked around and asked him what he was doing at my hotel. He said his friend there, and he pointed at another American drummer eating with him, whom he had met at the Palace, had lost all his money playing roulette, and he now had to finance him so they had decided to hunt up my cheap joint and stick it out as best they could.

As the day was Sunday they planned that the three of us should go to the bull-fight. So that afternoon we set out. We drove down to the Circo in a cab and my two drummers shouted at every person

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they saw on the way. Naturally they bought the most expensive seats in the Circo, on the "Sombra" side, which corresponds to our grandstand. However, they never did reach their seats.

THE fight was under way when we entered and we paused in the approach to look at it. There was a man in green and gold in a big yellow ring sticking a sword into a bull. He must have been a bad matador for he would jab in his sword on top of the bull's shoulder and it would come out of his side—spitted bull, it didn't look nice. Finally the fighter punctured the animal's lungs and it knelt down on the sand with torrents of blood pouring from its nose and finally died.

Now this made all three of us angry. My two friends began shouting for the bull and wishing in loud tones that it would kill the matador. I felt the same way. Presently as the bull kept smearing the sand red, my companions grew quiet. Then my hero said, "This is no fun, let's go."

"No," I agreed, "this is certainly no fun, but it is highly unusual in my life. Let's stick around and see the rest of the bulls killed."

Both the drummers agreed reluctantly, and we watched another bull or two slaughtered. Then the drummer said, "Look here, I've got to go."

"No," I begged, "let's see it through for the novelty of the thing. I may want to write a bullfight tale some day."

HE STOOD about three minutes longer and then said in a different voice, "Say—Stribling—would you mind h-holding me up. I'm—all in."

And just as I grabbed him around the waist he dropped over like a sack. The other drummer and I carried him to a stone bench near the entrance and a guard brought some water and threw it in his face. When he revived, the two drummers got into a cab and went back to the pension.

I stayed the fight out and odd to say, within twenty minutes a bull really had tossed one of the matadors. This was *Felipe*, the bull fighter I used in my story. *Felipe* was pretty badly bunged up. Afterward I learned in the papers his right leg was gored.

After the fight was over I went back to the pension and found both my friends up in their room in bed. They were still pale and shaken. I said, "You fellows made a mistake to leave the Circo when you did. A bull finally tossed *Felipe* and nearly killed him. You boys would have enjoyed that."

Both of them sat up suddenly in bed, "The—— he did! And we missed it!" "What—— luck!" "Oh —— but I would have given a year's salary to see that man get his!'

They jumped out of bed, got into their clothes still cursing their luck at not seeing the bull get his revenge. All Americans are pro-bull at a bull fight. It seems to be a part of our national make-up. My two friends were completely cured.—T. S. S.

THE clipping referred to in the following letter quotes National Commander Owsley of the American Legion as saying that radical and pacifist organizations are luring schoolboys to sign pledges never to enter the service of their country, either in offense or defense. I do not know just which organizations have been doing this, but it is up to all good Americans who understand the real meaning of democratic government to be on guard, each in his own locality, against any such disloyal teachings. War is wicked and foolish, but the remedy does not lie in disloyalty to obligation.

I suppose that the pacifist activities mentioned in the enclosed clipping have come to your notice but I want to make sure.

Do you know what organizations are taking this action with schoolboys? If you do, won't you publish their names and warn your readers against them? Many well meaning and patriotic men in this country hate war and have thoughtlessly given support to organizations claiming to be working for the preservation of peace. These same men, possibly some of them school authorities, may be persuaded to allow this virus of cowardice and disloyalty to be injected into our schoolboys.

I know of no publication that can reach as many real men as *Adventure* and I hope that *Adventure* will ask these men to take an active part in suppressing this evil. If there is no law to take care of these men who are teaching our schoolboys to crawl out of sight when their country needs them, at least your readers can be on guard each in his own community.— ——.

A WORD from Barry Scobee in connection with his story in this issue:

Bellingham, Washington.

They do have men in the world like *Sweezy* in this story laid in New Mexico. In another State I knew a man (wholly unlike *Sweezy* in birth and physique and character) who did about what *Sweezy* did. His patron, almost with his last breath, I reckon, asked him to give to a certain man living in town cattle and money amounting to, as I recollect, about $40,000. Nobody else on earth knew about that request. But that man made it known and turned over the wealth. I saw some of the cattle driven to market. And I had the gall to ask the man why he did it. His answer was brief: "Oh, it was the right thing, I thought."—BARRY SCOBEE.

AN INTERESTING look-in on the Custer massacre from a comrade who met the Indians in Canada after the battle:

British Columbia.

I was interested in various communications relating to the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

THE statement that "Comanche" was the sole equine survivor can hardly be true, for when the Sioux crossed the line into Canada they brought several cavalry chargers with them. One, a gray gelding, said to have been ridden by a trumpeter of the 7th Calvalry, was taken from the Indians by B Troop of the North West Mounted Police, was

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by the Police called "Custer" and went with the troop to Q'Appelle in '80 and eventually died in Regina (I think).

I bought a Springfield cavalry carbine, taken after the fight, from an Indian for $2, but unfortunately did not value it enough to keep it.

I knew a half-breed who claimed to have been a packer with Benteen's column. He said that after General Crook came up he was on the battle-field, that the dead were all stripped naked, none were scalped, and that the only mutilated body was that of an officer who had some Indian blood in him. The Indians had cut the back of his neck and twisted his head with the face backward, the explanation being that the Indians looked on him as a traitor to the race on account of being part Indian.

A presentation gold watch with the name of the officer on it was also recovered by the Police and sent to the officer's relatives.—WASEECHA HOSKE.

PLEASE consider the following from Major Schauffler of our "A.A." department. I believe strongly in the wisdom of building a foundation for a strong air defense. Since the following was written the newspapers have carried accounts of a similar peace-time preparation by Japan.

The French aviation policy is as shrewd as it is assuring of a great and powerful air defense to France. In order to secure the advent of a superior commercial flying machine the French budget for 1923 increases by 25 per cent. the funds alloted to technical development and by the same percentage reduces subsidies to transport companies and expenditures on ground equipment. Forty-eight million francs are set apart to get the superior air transport machine. Well, it will be as superior in war as in peace. They have an uncanny way of providing for the national defense in France. In the United States we believe military types must diverge from commercial types of aircraft. Of the two policies, ours fits our particular situation the better because of our geographical position. We will make headway the faster when the point of divergence between military and commercial aeronautics is more generally recognized. However, by furnishing quick transport in time of emergency our commercial aircraft will prove an important auxiliary to all our means of national defense. For the welfare of the nation the two air developments, military and commercial, must go together along the path of highest possible attainment.—W. G. SCHAUFFLER, JR.

DON'T forget that we are selling our cover originals by a new system. Covers will be auctioned by mail as heretofore, but instead of holding all bids until the end of the year, we shall send each cover to the highest bidder one month after the issue of the magazine bearing that cover has appeared on the news-stands. Thus bidding on the cover of the September 10th issue, out August 10th, will be closed September 10th. Minimum bid, ten dollars.—A. S. H.

A STATION may be in any shop, home or other reputable place. The only requirements are that a Station shall display the regular Station sign, provide a box or drawer for mail to be called for and preserve the register book.

No responsibility for mail is assumed by anybody; the Station merely uses ordinary care. Entries in register to be confined to name or serial number, route, destination, permanent address and such other brief notes or remarks as desired; each Station can impose its own limit on space to be used. Registers become permanent property of Station; signs remain property of this magazine, so that if there is due cause of complaint from members a Station can be discontinued by withdrawing sign.

A Station bulletin-board is strongly to be recommended as almost necessary. On it travelers can leave tips as to conditions of trails, etc., resident members can post their names and addresses, such hospitality as they care to offer, calls for any travelers who are familiar with countries these residents once knew, calls for particular men if they happen that way, etc., notices or tips about local facilities and conditions. Letters to resident members can be posted on this bulletin-board.

Any one who wishes is a member of Camp-Fire and therefore entitled to the above Station privileges subject to the Keeper's discretion. Those offering hospitality of any kind do so on their own responsibility and at their own risk and can therefore make any discriminations they see fit. Traveling members will naturally be expected to remember that they are merely guests and act accordingly.

Keepers answer letters only if they wish. For local information write "Ask Adventure."

A Station may offer only the required register and mail facilities or enlarge its scope to any degree it pleases. Its possibilities as headquarters for a local club of resident Camp-Fire members are excellent.

The only connection between a Station and this magazine is that stated above, and a Keeper is in no other way responsible to this magazine nor representative of it.

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60—San Bernardino. Charles A. Rouse, Hotel St. Augustine.
73—Galt. E. M. Cook, Box 256.
74—Eagle Rock. John R. Finney, 109 Eddy Ave.
89—Chico. K. W. Mason, 1428 Park Ave.
108—Helendale. G. R. Wells, P. O. Box 17.
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115—Los Gatos. G. H. Johnson.
116—Sabastopol. Mrs. Lucy E. Hicks, 420 S. Main St.
126—Covelo. Whit H. Ham. Box 388.
141—Santa Cruz. A. W. Wyatt, Capitola Road and Jose Ave.
149—San Francisco. A. H. Hutchinson, Veteran Press, 1264 Valencia St.
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142—Meriden. Homer H. Brown, 1 Colony Place.
D. C.—167—Washington. Walter A. Sheil, 503 Sixth St. N. E.
Florida—87—Miami. A. C. Smith, 49 N. E. First St.
117—Miami. Miami Canoe Club, 115 S. W. North River Drive.
128—Titusville. Max von Koppelow, Box 1014.
129—Clearwater. E. E. Preston, 504 Vine St.
139—St. Petersburg. Capt. Lee Whetstone, Hotel Poinsettia.
143—St. Petersburg. J. G. Barnhill, 10 Third St. N.
158—Crescent City. E. N. Clark, care *Courier*.
179—Key West. William McCarthy, 201 Fleming St.
188—Johnson. Clifford Martin.
Georgia—98—Hinesville. R. N. Martin, *The Liberty County Herald*.

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Idaho—110—Pocatello. C. W. Craig, 223 S. Second Ave.
Indiana—18—Connersville. Norba Wm. Guerin, 112 East Eighteenth St.
90—Linton. Herschell Isom, 73 Tenth St., N. E.
180—Warsaw. Homer Lewis.
Illinois—47—Peoria. B. H. Coffeen.
66—Mt. Carmel. W. C. Carter, 1122 Chestnut St.
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82—Baltimore. Joseph Patti, Jr., 4014 E. Lombard St.
151—Williamsport. L. J. Schaefer. Frederick St.
Michigan—69—Grand Rapids. Dr. A. B. Muir, 1133 Lincoln Ave., N. W.
79—Lansing. Geo. H. Allen, *Lansing Industrial News*, 109½ N. Washington Ave.
80—Detroit. R. A. Taylor, 5129 Maybury Grand.
106—Gaylord. Sidney M. Cook.
131—North Muskegon. James Fort Forsyth, Forsyth Publisher's Service. Phone 5891.
137—Flint. O'Leary & Livingston, 300 So. Saginaw St.
192—Pickford. Dr. J. A. Cameron, The Grand Theater.
Minnesota—112—St. Paul. St. Paul *Daily News*, 92 E. Fourth St.
145—Brainerd. F. T. Tracey, care Brainerd Gas & Electric Co.
181—Ortonville. T. Glenn Harrison. *The Ortonville Independent.*
Mississippi—88—Tunica. C. S. Swann, Box 244.
99—Picayune. D. E. Jonson.
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93—Rochester. Thomas C. Murphy, 62 Swan St.
107—New York City. Bronx Division, U. S. Junior Naval Reserves, 3132 Webster Ave.
140—New York City. L. D. Montgomery, U.S.S. *Utah.*
147—Youngsville. Harry Malowitz, Youngsville House.
165—Saratoga. Wm. Marshall, Office No. 9, Chamber of Commerce Arcade.
171—Albany. 224 Greene St.
177—Brooklyn. George Iverson, 306 Macon St.
185—Brooklyn. J. M. Canavan, 69 Bond St.
193—Niagara Falls. Roy Tompkins, 1155 Garret Ave.
194—Hadley. Mrs. Chas. H. Black.
North Carolina—92—Asheville. B. Taylor and C. M. Gravatt. The Southern Spar and Mica Co., 322 Haywood Bldg.
133—Pine Bluff. N. Steve Hutchings.
159—Waynesville. Harry M. Hall, 720 Walnut St.
North Dakota—109—Stanley. Dr. W. W. Coe, Box 301.
160—Fargo. James E. Cowan, Central Garage, rear Grand Theatre.
Ohio—58—Cleveland. J. P. Thompson, Community Pharmacy, 9505 Denison Ave.
52—Ulrichsville. Anthony Sciarra, 329 W. Fourth St.
63—Uhrichsville. Chas. F. Burroway, 312 Water St.
75—Columbus. Chas. W. Jenkins, 54 S. Burgess Ave.
113—Buena Vista. Geo. T. Watters.
166—Toledo. Frank P. Carey, 3267 Maplewood Ave., or wherever his Ford happens to be.
Oklahoma—57—Haskell. Roy Holt.
Oregon—4—Salem. D. Wiggins.
187—Portland. W. J. Belduke, 29½ N. Ninth St.
Pennsylvania—20—Philadelphia. Wm. A. Fulmer, 252 S. Ninth St.
21—Braddock. Clarence Jenkins, Union News Co.
24—Philadelphia. Alfred A. Krombach. 4159 N. Eighth Street, and Spring Mills Station, P. & R. Ry. Co., Montgomery County.
78—Pittsburgh. Peter C. Searmach, 3201 Brereton St.
100—Philadelphia. Veterans of Foreign Wars, 926 N. 41st St.
121—Philadelphia. Dan L. Brown, 3444 D St.
152—Harrisburg. Mrs. L. H. Wistrand, Box 1027.
182—Greensburg. Don Frederick Wermuth.
South Dakota—179—Fairburn. Jesse E. Fell, *Custer County Press.*
Tennessee—195—Knoxville. C. G. Pruden, 2024 Rose Ave.
Texas—33—Houston. J. M. Shamblin, 2003 Gray St.
123—San Juan. D. L. Carter, Box 436.
134—Breckenridge. Joe Randel, 226 Baylor Avenue.
135—Mexia. Charles O. Hurley, M. D.
148—Port Arthur. Ralph C. Cornwell, 215 Eighth St.
174—San Angelo. E. M. Weeks, 24 West Eighth St.
183—South San Antonio. J. F. Nicodemus, Box 111, So. San Antonio Transfer.
Utah—157—Salt Lake City. Ned Howard, 127 N. St.
Vermont—56—Fort Ethan Allen. E. Worth Benson, Box 10.
Virginia—108—Cape Charles. Lynn Stevenson, Custom House Building.
Washington—1—Ione. A. S. Albert, Albert's Billiard Hall.
61—Burlington. Judge B. N. Albertson, Fairhaven Ave.
83—Seattle. Chas. D. Raymer, Raymer's Old Book-Store, 1330 First Ave.
153—Monroe. Ed. L. Carson, *The Monitor.*
154—Mt. Vernon. Miss Beatrice Bell, Western Washington Auto Club.
155—Olympia. B. F. Hume, Commercial Club Rooms.
172—Sunnyside. Mark Austin.
196—Arlington. F. T. Herzinger.
West Virginia—48—Huntington. John Geisler, 1668 Sixth St.
Wisconsin—41—Madison. Frank Weston, 401 Gay Bldg.
5—Milwaukee. Paul A. Buerger, Apt. 2, 158 Biddle St.
138—Tomahawk Lake. Mrs. J. S. Hughson, Hughson's Resort.
Africa—173—Sinkat, Red Sea Province, Sudan. W. T. Moffat.
Australia—39—Melbourne. William H. Turner, 52 Emmaline St., Northcote; and Carters' and Drivers' Union, 46 William St.
76—Victoria. Chas. M. Healy, 30, The Avenue, Windsor Post, Dist. No. 8.
130—Brisbane. H. V. Shead, Sutton St., Kangaroo Pt.
Belgium—131—Antwerp. Reuben S. James, Rue Chapelle de Grace 4.—Grage Kapel-straat, 4.
Canada—31—Howe Sound. C. Plowden, Plowden Bay.
84—White Rock, B. C. Charles L. Thompson.
22—Burlington, Ontario. T. M. Waumsley, Jocelyn Bookstore.
4—Dunedin, P. E. Island. J. N. Berrigan.
29—Deseronto. Harry M. Moore, *The Post Weekly.*
45—Norwood, Manitoba. Albert Whyte, 179½ De Meurons St.
30—Winnipeg, Man. Walter Peterson, 143 Kennedy St.
62—Woodstock, Ontario. George L. Catton, 94 Metcalfe St.
85—Oshawa, Ontario. J. Worral, 634 King St. E.
102—Amherst. Lloyd E. MacPherson, 5 Belmont St.
124—Hartshorn, Alberta. Leonard Brown, 33-34-17 W4M.
178—Moncton, N. B. Chas. H. McCall, 178 St. George St.
Newfoundland—132—St. John's. P. C. Mara, Smallwood Bldg.
Canal Zone—37—Cristobal. F. E. Stevens.
156—Ancon. Arthur Haughton, Box 418.
Cuba—15—Havana. Ricardo N. Farres, Dominguez, 7 Cerro.
175—Miranda, Oriente. Volney L. Held.
Great Britain—65—North Wales. William J. Cooper, "Kia-Ora," Plastirion Ave., Prestatyn.
Hawaiian Islands—170—Leilehua, Oahu, Château Shanty.
Honduras, C. A.—32—Galeras, Olancho. Dr. Wm. C. Robertson.
70—La Ceiba. Jos. Buckly Taylor.
India—197—Calcutta. Wm. Leishman, 46 Wellesley St.
Mexico—68—Guadalajara, Jal. W. C. Money, Hotel Penix, Calle Lopez, Cotilla Nos. 269 a 281.
136—Tampico, Tamps. Jack Hester, care of T. D. El Humo, Apartado 238.
Navy—71—U. S. *Arizona.* Elmer B. McLean.
Porto Rico—46—Ensenada. M. B. Couch, P. O. Box 5.
Philippine Islands—198—Manila. W. W. Weston, De La Rama Bldg.
West Indies—199—Santo Domingo. A. W. Wells, Estate Consuelo, San Pedro de Marcoris, R. D.

Various Practical Services to Any Reader

In the last issue of each month are printed in full the friendly services o *Adventure* to readers: Free Identification Card in eleven languages (metal, 25 cents); Mail Address and Forwarding Service; Back Issues Exchanged; Camp-Fire Buttons; Camp-Fire Stations, etc.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the section in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert may give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their sections, subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but with an eye to their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided self-addressed envelop and *full* postage, *not attached,* are enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose section it seems to belong.**

Please Note: **To avoid using so much needed space each issue for standing matter and to gain more space for the actual meat of "Ask Adventure" the full statement of its various sections and of "Lost Trails" will be given only in alternate issues. In other issues only the bare names of the sections will be given, inquirers to get exact fields covered and names and addresses from full statement in alternate issues. Do *not* write to the magazine, but to the editors of the sections at their home addresses.**

1—3. The Sea. In Three Parts
4, 5. Islands and Coasts. In Two Parts
6, 7. New Zealand and the South Sea Islands. In Two Parts
8. Australia and Tasmania
9. Malaysia, Sumatra and Java
10. New Guinea
11. Philippine Islands
12. Hawaiian Islands and China
13. Japan
14—17. Asia. In Four Parts
18—25. Africa. In Eight Parts
26. Turkey and Asia Minor
27—29. Balkans. In Three Parts
30. Scandinavia
31. Germany, Czecho-Slovakia, Austria, Poland
32—34. South America. In Three Parts
35. Central America
36, 37. Mexico. In Two Parts
38—44. Canada. In Seven Parts
45. Alaska
46. Baffinland and Greenland
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53—56. Middle Western U. S. In Four Parts
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Mining and Prospecting
Weapons, Past and Present. In Three Parts
Salt and Fresh Water Fishing
Tropical Forestry
Aviation
Standing Information
Lost Trails

Anzac Day

THIS was written on April 25, 1923. "Anzac," of course, is the name of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps:

Question:—"I would like a little information concerning New Zealand. First perhaps I had better tell you a little of myself. I am twenty-five years old, in as good health as the average, I suppose, and an ex-service man.

Now I would like to go to New Zealand to work. Have experience in the following lines: Printing (pressroom end), firing on locomotive, and stationary engineer; also have put in some time on farms. Do you think it possible for me to get work there? What are the chances for farming?

I will have about $2,000 to take with me. Is there much printing in the larger cities? I would

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like to work for about six months after I get there so I could look around.

The United States, as you no doubt know from *Adventure*, is getting too many freak laws, and I want to go somewhere where I can shoot a gun without breaking a dozen laws. The U. S. A. is still a mighty *good* country though.

I think you will understand what I want. I want some place where I can work a while and play a while without having to travel half-way around the world to do both.

I have no family, also no inclination to acquire one. Well, I will not bother you any longer except for one thing. Can you buy American ammunition there? I have a .30-30 Win. and .45 Colt Army, which I would like to bring with me.

Enclosed find an addressed envelop, also stamps.

If you see fit to publish this in *Adventure* please do not use my name."—J. S. S., Topeka, Kan.

Answer, by Mr. Mills:—Congratulations on your service. Today is the eighth anniversary of Anzac Day, and under the laws of New Zealand it is as close a holiday as Sunday—everything close shut. Even the railway trains are not running from one end of the land to the other—not even the through expresses. No daily paper is publishing. Not a hand is working in a post-office in city or country—and the hotels are shut! What do you think of that for a tribute to the men who went West and the men who returned from the Great War?

Anzac Day! The day the New Zealanders and Australians and British forces from England landed on Gallipoli. In this little town of ours today there is a church parade of the ex-service men; then those on parade are entertained at luncheon by the ladies of Feilding, and at 2:30 there is a large public religious service under the auspices of the Ministers' Association. And that is the procedure in every town and city in New Zealand today. Hats off to the men who served!

Yes; with your handiness as a printer and as an engineer and your farm experience you would do well over here, especially as you have some money to keep you going. Plenty of printing in our cities and towns. "The best newspapered country in the world" is what critics and tourists have said of New Zealand.

And as for gun sport, you would be coming to a sportsman's paradise. We work eight hours per day, there are lots of holidays, there is the Saturday half-holiday and there is the annual vacation under the industrial laws for all workers. That gives you a chance to get out with your gun. And there is ample in the way of rabbits and pigeons and wild pigs and deer-stalking to shoot at.

Yes, you can get American ammunition over here. You would have to register your guns, but that is a mere detail. You can leave your Colt at home—we don't carry side-arms in New Zealand and the keeping of them on the premises is discouraged. You will find New Zealand very easy to live in, good and all as may be the good old U. S.

Names and addresses of department editors and the exact field covered by each section are given in the next issue of the magazine. Do not write to the magazine itself.

Rock and Trout of Chesapeake Bay

HERE'S a trick with an eel that gets the big striped bass:

Question:—"Being an ardent fisherman and living in Baltimore, would thank you for any information you could furnish me regarding the best fishing-grounds on the Chesapeake and tributaries as far down as Chesapeake Beach. Have a twenty-five foot Chesapeake cruiser, so can make 'most any fishing grounds on the bay.

What is the best bait for trolling for rock, and where are the best rock-fishing grounds? What is the best bait and method for catching trout and the best place to catch same?

These trips are only week-end trips, from Saturday noon to Sunday night, so therefore please base your answers accordingly. Speed of boat ten miles per hour.

Have trouble in keeping fish fresh in ice-box, as this box on Sunday is not very cold. Have you any suggestion to make to keep fish fresh longer in this case? What kind and size hooks are best for rock-fishing; also for trout-fishing?"—John L. Adelsberger, Baltimore, Md.

Answer, by Mr. Shannon:—Indeed and you won't have to travel far from Baltimore to find good fishing for either sea-trout or striped bass, known locally as "rock."

Run down the Patapsco to the bay and head for Love Point on Kent Island, then skirt the eastern shore of that island until you find the inlet into Eastern Bay through Kent Island Narrows.

Just where the bridge crosses from the Maryland shore to Kent Island and for a mile above and below it you will find rock in plenty from the middle of May until September.

If you miss them there, run down to Parson Island four miles below the bridge and try the channel between Kent Island and Parson Island leading into Crab Alley.

The mouth of Chester River just off Eastern Neck is also a favorite trolling-ground. And we hooked some big ones up the Chester about five miles at the mouth of Corsica River.

In the early Spring Port Deposit is the one best bet; but you'll have to run up the Eastern Shore or take a chance of colliding with a sixteen-inch whiz-bang from the Aberdeen Proving-Grounds.

Good trout-fishing off Betterton, Worton's Point, and Rock Hall. Better yet at Flagpond, about ten miles north of Cove Point.

The striped bass is a voracious fellow and at times will take any offering. Shedder crabs, shrimp, minnows, blood-worms and clams claim his attention when he is in the mood. But the one best bet for the striped battler is made up like this:

Take a 5-O O'Shaughnessy triple-gutted hook, cut about eight inches from a small eel and run the hook through it about three inches from the end of the tail, lash the eel to the gut with silk, leaving the end of its tail to swing free like a pork-rind lure; attach the gut to a small spinner, using swivel. Attach a flat-keel sinker two feet above spinner. Troll around rocks and in swift water. If my description isn't plain ask any of the old-timers along the Susquehanna to show you the trick.

Two or three good big blood-worms, strung on a hook with most of their length left hanging and

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attached to a small free-acting spinner are positively the most killing bait used for small fish running under three pounds. But for the big 'uns—stick to eels.

I use a light-weight, six-foot rod, a nine-thread cuttyhunk line and a good anti-backlash multiplier with a three-foot mist-colored triple-gut leader, for practically all bay fishing.

Both rock and trout will strike a pork-rind wiggler at times. I used a Little Egypt with fairly good success in the creeks along the Choptank River. Also the Perfection Company's "wiggle-tail."

If you will split and clean your fish and pack them in brine and ice they will keep firm, and it rather improves their flavor. Kept fish that way for forty-eight hours last Summer, and I didn't have the ice—just set the brine-pan in cold water.

Personally I swear by 4-O and 5-O O'Shaughnessy hook for all salt-water fishing. They are deadly and sure. No one seems to know just why this particular type of hook is so deadly to bass, but they get the fish.

I should be pleased to answer any other inquiries you might care to make, and hope that you spend an enjoyable Summer in that twenty-five footer and manage to get your share of the finny fellows.

The Sperry Sport Plane

ALREADY many business men prefer aviation to the automobile as a method of getting around the country:

Question—"What is the smallest standard airplane of American manufacture? What kind of motor has it? What is the cost?

Which is the best motor for small airplanes, the upright or rotary? Name one make of each that you can recommend.

What is the *best* book you can recommend on airplane motors? Also on aviation in general.

Any other information on aviation will be appreciated.

If printed in *Adventure* please do not use my name. Use my "*Nom de guerre*," "THE SOUTHERN ROAMER."

Answer, by Maj. Schauffler:—I shall answer your questions in the order in which you gave them to me.

The Sperry Sport or Messenger plane is without doubt the smallest plane of standard manufacture in the United States. There are others as small or perhaps a little smaller, but the Sperry has been adopted by the United States Army Air Service and at the present time is in use on most of the Air Service fields.

Quite a number of sportsmen also use this little plane as a quick means of getting about, while Lawrence Sperry, the man who designed it and manufactures it, has almost given up the use of his automobiles, for he finds that he can go anywhere in his "Messenger" in faster time and much more comfortably than he can in a slow automobile. A little over a year ago Mr. Sperry landed with his plane on the small space in front of the Capitol steps here in Washington and after attending to his business took off again with perfect safety and with room to spare. Just a few days ago, too, Mr. Sperry flew from Washington to Dayton, Ohio, in just a few hours when it would have taken him much longer to go by fast express trains.

The Sperry Sport or Messenger plane is all that the name implies—all the work of lugging a big heavy ship about, which carries only two people, has been eliminated.

Its dependability, simplicity of construction, economy of operation and ease of handling and housing make it an ideal airplane for both pleasure and passenger-carrying.

It is a two-place, rigid-truss biplane of pleasing appearance, which is due to the clean lines of its design. The Lawrence three-cylinder, air-cooled motor happily blends into the nicely streamlined fuselage of plywood, leaving only the three cylinders exposed to the air, while the steel wing-truss and struts are arranged to create a minimum head resistance. The wings, ailerons and tail-surfaces are easily detachable, and many of the parts are interchangeable, as for instance such parts as the upper and lower wings and ailerons.

Structurally the machine differs slightly from standard practise, which difference is principally in the rigid type of wing-trussing, made of round steel tubing and streamlined with balsa wood. The fuselage is of usual longeron and diagonal-strut type covered with three-ply mahogany veneer. The pilot and passenger cockpit is roomy and neatly upholstered, and the rear cushion is so arranged that it may be taken out and a parachute pack carried in its place.

A large instrument-board with a complete set of instruments including a tachometer, altimeter, compass, oil-gage, clock and engine-switch are mounted conveniently in the machine. The deck fairing and wind-shield in front of the pilot are so arranged that, while giving a good view, it deflects the air from the pilot's face, making it unnecessary to wear goggles when flying the machine. The controls are of standard stick and foot-bar type.

The wings are of good design and construction, and the upper and lower panels are interchangeable. Great pains have been taken to design wings which were strong and simple in construction, as well as to facilitate quick assembly on the field or on the deck of a ship. There is but one life-wire; the rest of the flying and landing loads are taken up by the steel struts. After the machine has once been assembled and the proper length found for the struts it can be knocked down and reassembled in a few minutes.

The wing-spars are of channeled spruce. Ribs are built up of mahogany webs, with spruce cap-strips. Ailerons are fitted to both upper and lower wings. All four are interchangeable. The wings are all sand-tested, standing a factor of safety of seven without failing. The wings also are sand-tested for inverted flight, taking a factor of safety of four without failure.

The power-plant, as mentioned before, is a three-cylinder, sixty-horse-power Lawrence air-cooled motor which has given wonderful results. The motor ran through several fifty-hour tests without the slightest indication of trouble or wear. The gas-tank is built in two compartments; the lower or main tank contains twelve gallons of gas, which is sufficient for two and a half hours of sustained flight. The upper or auxiliary tank contains two and a half gallons, sufficient for half an hour.

The stability of the machine is very good under both high and low speeds, and the difference can hardly be felt on the control stick under these two conditions. The controlability is remarkable on all

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three controls, and without tendency to act too quickly. In this respect it is comparable to the British S. E.-5, while maneuverability is comparable to the French Nieuport. Due to the low wing-loading and the high life-wing it has a slow landing-speed which allows one to land "on a dime." The take-off is remarkably fast too, which makes the plane an ideal one, for one can land or take off almost in his own back yard.

The specifications of the Sperry Messenger plane are as follows: Span, twenty feet, four inches; length, eighteen feet, six inches; height, seven feet; chord, forty-eight inches; gap, forty-six inches; stagger, eighteen inches; wing-curve, U. S. A.-15; area of wings, one hundred fifty-four square feet; horse-power, sixty; weight empty, five hundred eighty-one pounds; useful load, four hundred thirty pounds; weight, loaded, ten hundred eleven pounds; loading per square foot, six and one-half pounds; loading per horse-power, seventeen pounds; high speed, eighty miles per hour; low speed, thirty-five miles per hour; climb in ten minutes, five thousand feet; gasoline for three and a half hours; radius of action, two hundred seventy-five miles.

The cost of operating the Sperry Messenger plane has been found after many careful tests to be: Gasoline and oil per hundred miles, $2.25; motor overhauling per one hundred miles, based on complete overhaul every hundred hours, $1; repairs and accessories to plane per one hundred miles of flying based on twenty-one per cent. of the total cost of plane, flying at an average of one hundred miles a day, two hundred eighty days a year, $5; depreciation of plane per one hundred miles based on twenty-three per cent. per year, $6.40.

The price as last quoted to me for the Sperry Messenger plane was $9,500 each in lots of ten; $6,950 each in lots of twenty. These prices are F. O. B., Farmingdale, Long Island, boxed for shipment, fully equipped with sixty-horse-power Lawrence Aero Engine Company Model L-4 motor.

I have answered the first question strictly as you gave it to me. However, there are other planes on the market which can be purchased for a great deal less. Aviation is developing so rapidly in the United States that it is hard to keep up with prices.

There are many foreign planes on the market here in the United States that can be purchased for very much less. The Sport Farman is one of these and is a mighty fine little bus. It handles well and is very reliable. Then of course there are hundreds of Curtiss "Jennies" on the market which can be bought for almost nothing at present.

In answering your second question I would say that any small, air-cooled motor would be the best for a small airplane. The Sperry Messenger, as stated above, has been equipped with the Lawrence three-cylinder motor. This motor is easy to take care of, easy to start in cold weather and of course lighter all the way through than an upright, water-cooled motor. The Curtiss O-X motor is as reliable as any and stands up under a lot of hard flying.

The following books are what you want, I believe. Anything in them is true and well worth reading if you are interested in aeronautics: "The Aeroplane Speaks," by Captain H. Barber (McGraw) *Aerial Age;* "All about Aircraft of Today," by Frederick A. Talbot, Funk & Wagnalls; "Aircraft," by Evan J. David, Charles Scribner's Sons of New York; "Aeroplane Construction and Operation," by John B. Rathdyrn; "Air Service Hand-Book," Government Printing-Office; "Aero Engines," by G. A. Burls, Chas. Griffin & Co., London.

While finishing this letter my attention has been drawn to the "air flivver" developed by Georges Barbot, a Frenchman. This little plane recently flew from France to England and will no doubt revolutionize the manufacture of small planes. Full description of this little plane will no doubt be published in the various aeronautical magazines at an early date. Indeed, perhaps such articles may have already appeared before *Adventure* can find it possible to print this.

"Ask Adventure" service costs you nothing whatever but reply postage and self-addressed envelop.

The Sudan

HERE'S another set of general questions which the "A.A." man didn't have to answer. Only he ultra-accommodatingly did. Remember, though, that if you want to be sure of a reply you must make your questions specific, and you must enclose a good-sized, self-addressed envelop with sufficient postage *not* attached:

Question:—"Would you please give me some particulars about the Sudan, especially climate, prospects, traveling, customs and trading. Please give me all information possible as I have a prospect in mind. Trust that you will not disappoint me."—CHARLES H. BRANDBERG, El Paso, Texas.

P. S. Probably enclosed envelop is not large enough.

Answer, by Mr. Moffat:—The modes of travel in this country are numerous; but the first place is held by our old friend, the camel. Railways are quite a new improvement in this country, but rapid progress is being made to connect up the interior by steam. The existing main railway lines run between Halfa and Khartoum, Port Sudan and Khartoum, Sennar and El Obeid.

Steamers also run from Khartoum down the Nile to Rejaf and Kosti. You can take it that any work which you may want to do in the interior will have to be done by camel.

Customs of the people cover a large area. The tribes are very numerous, and each tribe have their own seperate customs. A life-long study could be made of each tribe, at the end of which we would still have a lot to learn. Each tribe have their own dialect, but the common language is, of course, Arabic.

The chief items of Sudan produce in which a big trade is done are gum arabic, cotton, ivory, durra, sesame, ground nuts—which we know as monkey nuts and Americans call peanuts—hides, skins and ostrich feathers. Out of those the main articles of export are gum arabic, cotton, ivory, durra and sesame.

The Sudan is situated between the Tropic of Cancer and the torrid zone and is therefore rather on the warm side. The temperature rises to an average of 103 degrees in the shade during the Summer months and sometimes has a nasty habit of running up to 117 degrees. Still, between you and me, I have felt it just as hot in Chicago or Detroit in the month of July.

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The rainy seasons vary according to the districts, but the main rainy season is usually July, August and September.

All that is wanted out here is good health and plenty of ambition and the climate won't worry you.

It all depends on what "prospects" you have in view. If you will enlighten me on the prospect you have, I will be glad to give you any information I can to help foster your plans.

There is plenty of work to be done out here, so if what you have in mind is a good thing, well, all I can say is, "Go ahead."

An A.A. Man Corrects Himself

OPEN confession is good for the soul. Mr. Beadle to the mourners' bench:

In June 20, 1923, issue I made a bad mistake in the letter you printed in "A. A." Guess I got balled up with dollars, pounds, francs, marks and kronen. For the price of an elephant license including other game my answer reads as dollars fifty and should read pounds sterling fifty.

I haven't got the fellow's address but if you think it worth while print the correction.

I've answered the same question before, but then I'm sure I had it right! Wonder this time I wasn't trapped into putting it at fifty thousand dollars! Sorry!—CHARLES BEADLE.

The Humber Country of Newfoundland

WORK, sport, hunting, fishing:

Question:—"I may be going down to Newfoundland next Spring to work in the Humber Valley. Will you kindly forward me some general information about this area? My work will be with the proposed hydro-electric development; and if I do go there, it will probably be for several years."—T. A. EDWARDS, Niagara Falls, Canada.

Answer, by Maj. Belford:—You should find your work in the Humber district very interesting, and life there very enjoyable. This is especially true if you are interested in sport, hunting and fishing. There is no better fish and game country in the world, the scenery is beautiful, the climate a good healthy one, plenty of snow in Winter, and a glorious Summer.

Newfoundland is just beginning to come into its own. It has splendid water powers, plenty of mineral, great forests, to say nothing of its old-established deep-sea fishing industry. It needs capital and men. Given these there is no doubt of its future.

In the Summer-time you will find agreeable society at Humbermouth. Many Americans come there in their yachts for the season, and it is the base for the English and French naval ships, protecting the fisheries.

There must be a great future before hydro in the island, and many opportunities for the wide-awake man who is on the spot.

Population is sparse, and is principally around the coast; but inland towns are springing up. Grand Falls, where the Harmsworth people have their pulp and paper mills, is an example.

If you like the feel of a salmon or a trout on the line, a caribou at your rifle's mercy, canoeing, boating, along with opportunity, you will like the Humber.

More about the Quito-Napo Trail

ALSO a few words on a prospector's chances around Zaruma, Ecuador; and about Indians who prefer to be slaves:

Question:—"I saw your letter in *Adventure* of November 30, 1921, on conditions in Ecuador. You speak of the trail between Quito and Napo as very bad. How and why is it bad? What is the elevation along the trail? I am a trapper and prospector, and I am getting ready to go south, so if you will give me some information I will thank you very much.

I speak some Spanish, such as is spoken in Mexico. Do you think a man can do much down there? I have no one but myself, and I like the wild life; in fact I am at this minute sitting on top of Mt. Ingalls, Calif., 8,377 feet above sea-level. I haven't much money; never did and never will have; but I want to see over the next hill.

Which is the cheapest way—down east by New Orleans and up the Amazon, or down the west side and over the trail? About what would be the cost for steamer fare? Where is the best market for bird plumes? I never dealt in feathers before, so don't know anything about market value for same."—EDWARD MERRY, Genesee, Plumas Co., Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Young:—Your account of sitting out on top of that mountain and writing me sounded good. I'm that sort of a bird, too. I wish you and I both were out there and some other poor dub was sitting up here pounding this Underwood.

A man rarely gets what he wants. I like solitude, and here I am in New York hemmed in with 7,000,000 swarthy-faced herd animals from all parts of the world; and when I travel I don't have room to swing my elbows, the way they gang me around here. Me and my burro, me and my canoe, me and my pack, me and my little frying-pan and my grub, me and my .30-30 and my .45 Frontier—what in —— is a guy like me doing up here with the herd?

You make me homesick for the trail, feller. Don't ever let them loose-herd you and put a hackamore on you. Getting tied down is a rambler's ——, I'm here to tell you.

Now let's see what it was you asked me. Well, the first thing you wanted to know is about that trail between Quito and Napo and what makes it bad. Now that trail is just as follows:

From Quito you can hire and ride a round-tail or hike to Papallacta. The road is fairly good all the way. This town is the dividing-point between the local civilization and the wilds.

You can find Spanish people in this town and also Indians who have just come in over the trail from the Oriente country. From there it's a path going up the mountains by starts and jerks and finishing with a good stiff climb to Bejeza from where it starts to go down. It's a path, and there is nothing in the way of bridges, and a man has to ford the creeks all the same mule or burro.

He can get Indian packers at Papallacta who will carry his bindle for a few cents a day, and they will also make the regular stops to camp at night. These fellows are dependable, honest, and as stupid as mules. You would travel a long way to find a better domesticated breed of Indians.

Men and women wear a sort of short pants made of white cloth and look like runners on the track

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A MODERN song, certainly not a ballad but none the less interesting, came to me a few days later from Professor Tom Peete Cross of the University of Chicago. It tells with remarkable dramatic effectiveness the story of a domestic tragedy. Much is omitted in the telling; only the high lights are touched, and the hearer gradually grasps the story as the song goes on. In this respect, and because it is told in dialog, it has a remarkable similarity to the method of narration frequently used in the ballads. Much of its real effect comes in the singing. It should be sung very slowly, with a long pause after the words "mawnin' " and "evenin'."

Ol' Bill

"Tell Ol' Bill when he comes home,
Dis mawnin'
Tell Ol' Bill when he comes home,
Dis evenin'
Tell Ol' Bill when he comes home,
Fer ter let dem down-town gals alone!"
Dis mawnin'—dis evenin'—so so-on.

Ol' Bill lef' by de alley gate,
Dis mawnin'
Ol' Bill lef' by de alley gate,
Dis evenin'
Ol' Bill lef' by de alley gate,
His wife said, "Bill, now don' be late."
Dis mawnin'—dis evenin'—so so-on.

"Oh dear, oh dear, how can dat be,
Dis mawnin'
Oh dear, oh dear, how can dat be,
Dis evenin'
Oh dear, oh dear, how can dat be,
Dey shot my husban' in de firs' degree?
Dis mawnin'—dis evenin'—so so-on.

Dey brought Bill home in de hurry-up wagon,
Dis mawnin'
Dey brought Bill home in de hurry-up wagon,
Dis evenin'
Dey brought Bill home in de hurry-up wagon,
His head wuz up, but his toes wuz a-draggin'.
Dis mawnin'—dis evenin'—so so-on.

I hope that some of you men can throw some light on its origin or can give additional versions. One of the verses is similar to a verse of "King Brady" which was printed here not long ago.

HENRY RIDEOUT asks if any of you can complete a song which he learned when a child from a very disreputable drunken sailor. His father discovered him and carried him home before the obliging sailor had finished. All that he remembers is:

Oh, the National Line, it ruined me,
It caused me grief and pain;
So we'll h'ist up on the turkey,
And we'll welt the road again.

Chorus: We'll welt the road again, my boys,
We'll welt the road again;
We'll h'ist up on the turkey,
And we'll welt the road again.

This sounds to me much more like a hobo song than a sailor song, but from all I can gather its singer belonged to both classes.

SEND all song material and all requests for information to R. W. GORDON, 1262 Euclid Ave., Berkeley, Calif. Do not send them to the magazine.

THE TRAIL AHEAD

SEPTEMBER 20TH ISSUE

Besides the new serial and the two novelettes mentioned on the second page of this issue, the next *Adventure* will bring you the following stories:

PETE HORNER'S MIRACLE — ***Walter Inland***
Unboiling a hard-boiled cattleman.

PRO PATRIA An Incident in the Affairs of Mohamed Ali — ***George E. Holt***
A Moroccan outlaw shows his love of country.

FOMBOMBO Conclusion — ***T. S. Stribling***
In the thick of a South American revolution.

A CAIN OF THE UPLANDS — ***William Byrom Mowery***
He escaped from the law, and men refused to shoot him.

FIGHTING MEN — ***John Webb***
The food was tough, but the crew agreed *One-Two Mac* was tougher.

JUNGLE EYES — ***Frederick Moore***
Murder will out.

BACK TO THE SOIL — ***H. S. Cooper***
Uncle Charlie dabbles in real estate.

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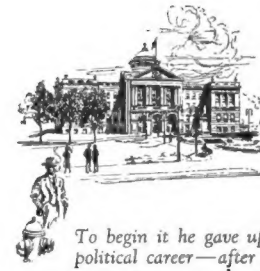
Brand Whitlock's Greatest Work—

a novel that will live



To begin it he gave up his political career—after four consecutive terms as the great "reform" mayor of Toledo, Ohio.

To write it he accepted the appointment as Ambassador to Belgium—where he could serve his country and realize his dream.

He carried the rough manuscript over war-ridden Europe during Belgium's darkest days.

Yet even then he could not complete this novel, his life's greatest work.

But when the war ended and he could leave his post, Mr. Whitlock came home to a little country town and wrote the book which for fifteen years had been developing in his mind.

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